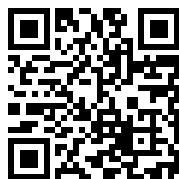


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**LIFE AND WRITINGS  
OF  
ST. COLUMBANUS**





THE LIFE  
AND WRITINGS OF  
"SAINT COLUMBAN,"

542 P-615

BY

GEORGE METLAKE

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REFORM MOVEMENT"



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## PREFACE.



On the 23 November, 1915, the Catholic world will commemorate the thirteenth centenary of the death of St. Columban, the monk and missionary to whom Christianity and civilization owe such an inestimable debt of gratitude. He was a son of that wonderful island of the West which, at the time of the Wandering of the Nations, was the providential haven of refuge of the Britanno-Roman civilization, and in the sixth and the seventh century sent forth heroic bands of missionaries to the north and south of Europe, to Scandinavia and Italy, to Gaul and Germany, to Spain and Africa. And when the sons of St. Benedict succeeded to the inheritance of the sons of St. Columban, such crowds of learned Irishmen continued to travel to the Continent, that Eric of Auxerre could write to Charles the Bald: "What shall I say of Ireland, which is migrating with almost her whole train of philosophers to our coasts?" and Hermanrich of Ellwangen was but paying a just tribute of admiration to Erin, when he wrote to Abbot Grimold of St. Gall: "*Sed neque de Hibernia insula silendum censeo, unde nobis tanti luminis jubar processit.*"—"I must not pass over in silence the island of Hibernia, whence such a flood of light went out to us."

The distinctive characteristics of the Irish monks of old, the passion for pilgrimage and preaching, the imperious necessity, as Montalembert calls it, of spreading themselves without, of seeking or carrying knowledge and faith afar, never died out: like the grand old faith itself, it is the characteristic of the Irish race. In our own day hundreds of thousands of the sons and daughters of Erin leave their country to earn their bread in honest toil abroad; and in every land under heaven, in Asia, Africa and America, in Australia and New Zealand and in the South Sea Islands, we find the Irish priest and monk and bishop converting the heathen or keeping bright the lamp of faith where it has already been lighted.

This attempt to portray the life and labors of one of the greatest Irishmen of all times is, therefore, properly and respectfully dedicated

TO  
THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF  
THE ISLAND OF SAINTS AND SCHOLARS  
AND THEIR DESCENDANTS IN EVERY LAND.

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## INTRODUCTION.

JONAS OF BOBBIO, THE BIOGRAPHER OF ST. COLUMBAN.

FOR our knowledge of the career of St. Columban we are indebted not to a son of the Island of Saints and Scholars, where his youth and early manhood were spent and where he was trained in the science, virtue, and heroism that made him such a shining light in one of the darkest periods of European history; nor to a son of the Franks, or Gauls, or Alamannians, for whose temporal and spiritual welfare he fasted and prayed, preached and toiled so many years,—but to a son of classic Italy, the land of his youthful aspirations, the scene of the struggles and triumphs of his declining years, and of the last stage of his wonderful earthly pilgrimage.

Jonas, whose life of St. Columban is, next to the Chronicle of Fredegar, the most important historical document of the seventh century, was born at Susa (Lower Piedmont), the ancient Segusio, an Alpine town at the foot of Mt. Cenis, twenty-five miles west of Turin. He was proud of the ancient glories of his birthplace, which he calls “*urbs nobilis, quondam Taurinatum colonia*”,<sup>1</sup> and quotes Virgil in support of the excellent quality of its apples, the mellowness of its chestnuts, and the abundance of its dairy produce.<sup>2</sup> He was not quite so taken with its climate at certain seasons of the year, especially with the rough blasts from the Pennine Alps that so often proved fatal to the Celtic spikenard.

During the boyhood of Jonas, Columban and his little band of Celtic monks came to Italy and, after a short sojourn in Milan, settled down at Bobbio on the Trebbia, at the foot of Monte Penice, midway between Genoa and Piacenza. We can imagine the eagerness with which young Jonas listened to the account given by some traveler from Milan or Pavia of the

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Columbani*, II, 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita Col.*, Praef. Virg. Ecl. I, 80.



strange appearance and the austere manner of life of the foreign monks, of their adventures in Gaul and Alamannia, of the royal welcome extended to them by King Agilulf and Queen Theodolinda, of the holy life and death of their leader, and of the miracles performed at his tomb. The boy's mind was soon made up: he would go to Bobbio and become a monk.

Columban had been dead three years when his future biographer applied to his successor, the saintly Attala, for admission into the monastery. Jonas's writings give us a fair idea of the course of studies pursued in Bobbio in those early days. They abound in quotations from the books of the Old and the New Testament, from the Fathers of the Church, from pagan and Christian poets and prose writers. Jonas appears to have taken particular delight in the works of Livy,<sup>3</sup> whose style he made heroic efforts to copy.

Jonas spent nine years in Bobbio before he was allowed to revisit Susa. "My parents had repeatedly entreated me to pay them a visit," he says; "but the abbot would not hear of it. One day, however, he said to me of his own accord: 'Go quickly, my son, visit your mother and brother and come back without delay'. As it was the month of February and very cold, I told him that I preferred to wait until the weather should be more favorable. But he said to me: 'Undertake the journey at once, for who knows whether you will ever have the opportunity again.' So I immediately set out for Susa, accompanied by the priest Blidulf and the deacon Hermenoald, two God-fearing, religious men. Great was my mother's joy at seeing me again after an absence of so many years; but her pleasure was destined to be short-lived. The very first night after my arrival I was seized with a violent fever and when the heat was at its height I cried out that I was tormented by the prayer of the man of God that I should not tarry, and that, unless they found some means of conveying me to the monastery, I should surely die. Then my mother said to me: 'It is better, my son, to know you alive in the monastery than to bewail you dead here at home.' I confess that I awaited the morning with impatience. With break of day we set out on

<sup>3</sup> In his *Vita Columbani*, I, 3, Jonas has the following quotation from Livy which is not contained in any extant work of that author: "Nihil tam sanctum religione tamque custodia clausum, quo penetrari libido nequeat."

our homeward journey. For three days I ate nothing, but as we drew near to the monastery the fever left me. When we arrived, we found our good father Attala stricken with the fever and at the point of death. He was exceedingly glad to see us, and thus we understood that the fever had been providentially brought upon me in order to oblige us to return to the monastery before his death."<sup>4</sup> On the following day, 10 March, 627, Attala after consoling the brethren and exhorting them to persevere in their holy calling and bidding each one farewell, rendered his holy soul to his Maker.<sup>5</sup> Jonas, who had been his private secretary,<sup>6</sup> had the happy thought of leaving to posterity a beautiful, but all too brief, record of his life.<sup>7</sup>

In June, 628, Jonas accompanied Bertulf, Attala's successor, to the Eternal City. The occasion of the journey was briefly this: After the death of Columban, Probus, Bishop of Tortona, tried by every means in his power to subject Bobbio to his jurisdiction. He was in a fair way to succeed, having already won over the neighboring bishops and bribed the courtiers of King Ariowald, when Bertulf put an end to his intrigues by referring the matter to the judgment of the Holy Father and going in person to Rome to plead the cause of his monastery. Honorius I, whom Jonas describes as "a man of great sagacity, prudence and zeal, of remarkable learning, sweetness and humility",<sup>8</sup> accorded the abbot of Bobbio a most favorable reception, made inquiries in regard to the state of the monastery and was delighted to hear that strict monastic discipline reigned within its walls and that the monastic virtues were held in honor.

During his sojourn in Rome Bertulf was daily summoned into the presence of the Pontiff, who exhorted him to persevere steadfastly in the course upon which he had entered and especially to combat the nefarious Arian pest that still infected northern Italy. Rejoiced to have found in the holy abbot "a

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, II, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, II, 2: "Beati viri ministerio deputatus."

<sup>7</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 1-6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, II, 23.

companion to whom he could open his heart freely",<sup>9</sup> Honorius would have gladly detained him longer at his court, but as the great heat made an early departure not only advisable but even necessary, he granted him, in a Bull, dated 11 June, 628,<sup>10</sup> the desired privilege of exemption from all episcopal jurisdiction, and reluctantly dismissed him.

On the return journey Bertulf gave Jonas a singular mark of his confidence and affection. The party had passed through Tuscany and were approaching the Apennines when the abbot, who had left Rome a sick man, was attacked by so violent a fever that all feared for his life. Tents were pitched for the night—it was the Vigil of the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul—on the ruins of the ancient *Castrum Bismantum*.<sup>11</sup> "During the night," says Jonas, "our good father called me into his tent to assist him in dispatching the business of the day. When all was done, he told me to watch by his bedside till morning. I tried to keep awake, but could not: the night was so sultry and my eyes were so heavy with sleep; those who watched by the baggage and the horses were also overpowered by sleep. While our camp lay thus buried in silence, the Prince of the Apostles, the blessed Peter, approached the bedside of our dear father and said to him: 'Arise and proceed on your journey to your brethren.'—'Who are you?' demanded the man of God. 'I am Peter,' was the reply; 'tomorrow the whole world celebrates my feast.' Greatly agitated, the abbot called out to me to know what had happened. When I told him that I had seen and heard nothing, he was silent, and it was only after much insistence on my part that he told me of the vision he had had."<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after Bertulf's return from Rome, Jonas was sent to Luxeuil, in Burgundy.<sup>13</sup> Eustace, who had succeeded St. Columban in the government of the monastery, was still alive

<sup>9</sup> *Ib.*, II, 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Liber Diurnus Rom. Pont.*, Form. 77 (ed. Sickel, p. 82).

<sup>11</sup> The present Bismantova, near Modena. Of this once famous stronghold nothing remains but a gigantic rock called by the townsfolk "*Pietra di Bismantova*."

<sup>12</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Jonas says that the abbots of Bobbio and Luxeuil exchanged monks quite often.

and Jonas had the happiness, as he himself tells us,<sup>14</sup> of conversing with him on the life and virtues and miracles of their holy founder and of assisting at his beautiful death, 2 April, 629.

Jonas made the journey from Bobbio to Luxeuil, not by way of the St. Bernard, but over the Rhaetian Septimerberg, in order to visit St. Gall in his cell on the Steinach. He seems to have visited the great Apostle of the Alamannians on other occasions also, or, at any rate, to have spent considerable time in his company, for, in the tenth chapter of his life of St. Columban, after describing the rich draught of fishes that Gall had taken in the Breuchin, near Luxeuil, he adds: "*Haec nobis supradictus Gallus saepe narravit—the above-mentioned Gall often related this incident to me*".

We do not know how long Jonas remained in Luxeuil. From his Celtic masters he had imbibed the "*desiderium peregrinandi*"—the longing "to go on pilgrimage." He wandered from city to city, from monastery to monastery, and was everywhere a welcome guest, because in those days the number of men skilled in letters was very limited, and bishops, abbots and abbesses indulged the hope that the gifted Italian could be induced to write a life of their favorite patron saints, or to record for the edification of their contemporaries the miracles wrought at their tombs.

In 639, the year before Bertulf's death, Jonas revisited his beloved Bobbio. It was on this occasion that he promised the abbot and the monks to write the life of St. Columban.<sup>15</sup> Three years, however, elapsed before he could find time to fulfil his promise, for, on his return to Gaul, Amandus, the Apostle of the Belgians and founder of the famous monastery of Elno,<sup>16</sup> invited him to assist him in his missionary work on the Scheldt and the Scarpe. No details have come down to us of Jonas's career as a missionary among the pagan tribes of the Netherlands. He himself tells us that he spent three years in this arduous and, as we know from the life of St. Amandus, at times dangerous work. The journeying from

<sup>14</sup> *Vit. Col.*, Introd. Letter.

<sup>15</sup> *Vit. Col.*, Introd.

<sup>16</sup> Now St. Amand, in Belgium.

mission to mission was for the most part done by water in a rude ash canoe.<sup>17</sup> It was on one of these expeditions that Jonas stopped at Arras for a much-needed rest and was prevailed on by the bishop and the clergy to write the life of St. Vedastes, the first Frankish bishop of that city.<sup>18</sup>

It is impossible to say what caused Jonas to break off his missionary labors. St. Amandus was one of those extraordinary men who are literally devoured with zeal for the spread of the Gospel. Whenever he heard of a people, no matter in what part of Europe, to whom the Gospel had not yet been preached, he could not rest until he had made at least an attempt to convert them. With a few trusty companions he would set out at a moment's notice for Friesland, the Spanish Marches, or the Slavish settlements on the Danube. Perhaps it was one of these sudden expeditions, whose unsuccessful issue, owing to lack of prudent organization, could be foreseen, that led Jonas to sever his connexion with St. Amandus. However that may be, in 643 we find him in the monastery of Evoriacum,<sup>19</sup> near Meaux, where the rule of Luxeuil was strictly observed under the energetic Burgundofara, whom St. Columban had consecrated to God in her childhood.

Jonas has left us some pleasant pen-pictures of cloister life in Evoriacum.<sup>20</sup> When a nun was on the point of death, the whole community assembled in and about her cell to bid her an affectionate farewell and to accompany her departing soul with joyful psalms and canticles. Thirty days after her death, "according to the custom of the Church," a Solemn Mass of Requiem was celebrated for the repose of her soul. Jonas himself officiated at the Month's Mind Mass for Sister Gibitrud, at which Burgundofara and all her nuns assisted. On Sundays, whilst the religious received Holy Communion under both kinds, the choir sang the Antiphon: "Hoc sacrum Corpus Domini, et Salvatoris Sanguinem sumite vobis in vitam

<sup>17</sup> *Vit. Col.*, Introd.: "Lintris abacta ascoque."

<sup>18</sup> See Bruno Krusch's edition of the *Vita Vedastis Ep. Atrebatensis* in *Monumenta Germaniae, SS. Rer. Merov. III*, pp. 399-414. Krusch has proved that either Jonas himself or one of his many imitators must be the author of the *Vit. Vedast*.

<sup>19</sup> Now called Faremoutiers, between the Grand-Morin and the Aubetin.

<sup>20</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 11-23.

aeternam—Receive this sacred Body of the Lord, and the Saviour's Blood unto life everlasting".<sup>21</sup>

The next, and unfortunately the last, trustworthy notice of Jonas is contained in the introduction to his *Vita* of St. John of Reomaus. In the month of November, 659, Jonas was sent by Chlothar III and his mother Balthildis on some state affair to Châlons-sur-Saône. The fatigues of the journey obliged him to rest for a few days at the monastery of St. John, near Semur-en-Auxois, and he then yielded to the importunities of abbot Chunna, a former pupil of Luxeuil, and promised to write an account of the life and miracles of their holy founder. As St. John was born about the middle of the fifth century and died after 543, we need not be surprised that his biographer could gather but meagre details about his life and contented himself, for the most part, with reproducing the legends that had gradually grown up around his name. The latter part of the work, however, is not only historically reliable but valuable also as containing an account of King Theodebert's expedition into Italy in 539 and of the pest that raged in Gaul in the year 543.<sup>22</sup>

In the introduction to the life of St. John of Reomaus, Jonas is called abbot; Raimbert, the author of the Life of St. Walaric, gives him the same title.<sup>23</sup> There can be no doubt, therefore, about the fact itself; but whether he was abbot of Elno, as his intimacy with St. Amandus has led some to believe, or of some Columbanian monastery in the Vosges, or a titular abbot in the service of the Frankish kings, it is impossible to determine. It is just as impossible to fix the date or place of his death. He was still alive in 665; <sup>24</sup> after that all trace of him is lost.

<sup>21</sup> The words are taken from the Antiphony of Bangor. (See Warren, *The Antiphony of Bangor*, London, 1893, vol. I, fol. 33.) Dr. Neale's translation of this hymn begins:

"Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord,  
And drink the holy Blood for you outpoured."

<sup>22</sup> See Krusch's edition of the *Vita Johannis Abbatis Reomaensis*, in M. G. H. SS. Rerum. Merov. III, pp. 502-17.

<sup>23</sup> *Vita Walarici*, C. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Kirchenlexikon*, Art. Jonas von Bobbio.

The fame of Jonas as a writer rests on his *Life of Columbanus*.<sup>25</sup> The author divides his work into two parts. "The first," he says, "gives a brief account of the career of the blessed Columban; <sup>26</sup> the second treats of his disciples Attala, Eustace and others whom we ourselves have known." His knowledge of the life of Columban he derived from the purest sources. "Very many of those with whom Columban had lived," he says in the preface, "and who were witnesses of the deeds done by him are still alive. These have told us not only what they had heard from others, but above all what they themselves had seen. Much, too, was communicated to us by the venerable fathers Attala and Eustace, the predecessors of Bobolen and Waldebert in the monasteries of Bobbio and Luxeuil. If I praise any one who is still among the living, do not on this account look upon me as a flatterer, but as a narrator of good deeds, and, believe me, whatever words of eulogy I have written, have not been written to curry favor with any one, but solely to hand down to posterity actions worthy of record. . . . We have set down what we have heard from reliable witnesses; what was no longer fully present to our mind, we have omitted altogether." <sup>27</sup>

The list of Jonas's witnesses is indeed a respectable one. Besides Eustace and Attala, already mentioned, there is Gall, the pupil of Columban in Bangor and the sharer of his labors till 613, who tells Jonas of the wonderful draught of fishes; Theudigisil, one of the first monks of Luxeuil, who shows him the finger that Columban had miraculously healed; Chagnoald, private secretary to Columban and afterward Bishop of Laon, who had often been witness of his master's familiarity with the birds and beasts of the forest; Donatus, Bishop of Besançon, whom Columban had baptized; Potentinus, the faithful companion of Columban during the trying journey to

<sup>25</sup> By far the best edition of the *Vita S. Columbani* is that of Bruno Krusch in the collection *Monumenta Germaniae historica*. Vol. IV of the *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, pp. 1-152. See also Lawlor, *The Manuscripts of the Vita S. Columbani*, Dublin, 1903.

<sup>26</sup> Four chapters are devoted to Columban's life in Ireland; sixteen to his labors in Burgundy; six to his adventures, etc., during his exile, and four to his missionary work in Alamannian territory and to the closing scenes of life in Italy.

<sup>27</sup> *V. Col.*, *Introd.* Jonas is very probably the author of the *Life of Praejectus, Bishop of Clermont*. (See *Neues Archiv.*, Vol. 18, pp. 629 ff., 1893.)

Nantes; Winioc, the father of abbot Bobolen and a frequent visitor in Luxeuil in its early days, and Sonichar, and Domoal, who had been privileged to attend Columban during the days of his solitary retirement. Jonas had friends, too, among the clergy of Mainz, who told him of the meeting between Columban and Bishop Lesio.

Thus we see that Jonas, although he had never seen St. Columban, was in a position to inform himself accurately in regard to the chief events of his life. His witnesses were all men of high moral character, not one of whom would have even for a moment entertained the thought of intentionally deceiving him. Of course there is the possibility, not to say the probability, that one or other of them looked upon certain happenings as miraculous and related them as such, which, on closer scrutiny, are susceptible of a natural explanation.

Born and bred, as he was, in Italy, we need not be surprised that Jonas was not all too well versed in Frankish history. His acquaintance with the *Historia Francorum* of Gregory of Tours must have been very imperfect; for he makes Columban arrive in Gaul "when Sigibert ruled over the two kingdoms of Austrasia and Burgundy"; whereas Gregory expressly says that Sigibert, who was king of Austrasia only, was slain in 575, and that Burgundy was not united with Austrasia until 592. He is better informed in regard to the events of the years 610-613, his statements agreeing on the whole with those of Fredegar.

Jonas was altogether mistaken as to the age of St. Columban, whom he believed to have been twenty or thirty years old on his arrival in Gaul, and about fifty or fifty-five at the time of his death. Both suppositions are inadmissible; for, in 603, Columban calls himself an "old man", a "veteran",<sup>28</sup> and when he wrote the *Verses to Fidolius* he was past seventy.

Certain writers have taken our biographer severely to task for making no mention of two important events in the life of his hero—the Paschal controversy and the affair of the Three Chapters. But it must be remembered that Jonas, on his own confession,<sup>29</sup> wrote primarily to edify, to spur on to imitation,

<sup>28</sup> Epist. II.

<sup>29</sup> *V. Col.*, Praef.



and to have enlarged on Columban's obstinacy in the controversy with the Gallic bishops or on his false position in the affair of the Three Chapters would not have been "unto edification and exhortation and comfort". Besides, the monks of Luxeuil had long since made peace with the Frankish bishops and those of Bobbio stood in high favor with the Holy See, so Jonas thought it best "to let old bygones be".

From the preface to his *Life of Columban* we learn that Jonas took for his models the best hagiographical works of the early Church. He had read St. Jerome's *Lives of St. Paul the Hermit and St. Hilarion*, and St. Athanasius's *Life of St. Antony*, as well as the lives of those "pillars of the Churches", as he calls them, St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine. He was also acquainted with more recent hagiographical literature, as is proved by his quotations from the *Life of St. Desiderius of Vienne* by Sisebutus, King of the Visigoths. The writings of Columban, the *Antiphony of Bangor*, and other Irish liturgical works were of course familiar to him. We have already referred to his knowledge of the Latin classics. It is no exaggeration to say that no author of the seventh century whose works have come down to us, was better read in them than he. He quotes Livy's great historical work and Pliny's *Natural History*; Virgil's *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, and *Æneid*; Juvenecus's *Paraphrase of the Gospels*, and Silius's *Epic of the Punic Wars*.

Jonas, however, was not content with mere admiration of the poets of Rome—he aspired to poetic honors himself. Although the pseudo-hexameters prefixed to his *Life of his master* can hardly be ascribed to him, with the exception perhaps of the last two lines, the style and spirit of the "*Versus in Columbae Festivitate ad Mensam Canendi*" and the "*Hymnus in Columbae Transitu Canendus*" leave no doubt as to their authenticity. The "*Hymnus in Transitu*," which is a recapitulation of the miracles performed by St. Columban, is written in the favorite meter of the Irish monks, the iambic tetrameter:

Nostris sollemnis saeculis  
Refulget dies inclita,  
Quo sacer caelos Columba  
Ascendit ferens trophea.

The "Versus ad Mensam Canendi" furnish us with the only contemporary evidence that St. Columban was a priest:

Clare sacerdos, clues, almo fultus decore,  
Tuis, Columba, decus qui redoles in orbe.<sup>30</sup>

Some Merovingian writers call Jonas "praeceptor", or teacher, and not altogether without reason, for the influence of the *Vita Columbani* can be traced in almost every hagiographical work of the seventh and eighth centuries. By his contemporaries Jonas was esteemed as "a man of great eloquence and profound erudition," as "a polished and elegant writer".<sup>31</sup> Fredegar (c. 645) incorporated several chapters of the *Vita Columbani* in his Chronicle and the first part of Wettin's *Vita S. Galli* is based on the same work. All that the Venerable Bede says in his historical works<sup>32</sup> about Columban, Eustace, Attala, Bertulf, and Burgundofara, is taken verbatim from Jonas; this has caused some writers to make the curious mistake of ascribing these biographies to Bede himself.

Although, according to our standards of taste, Jonas can hardly be called "a polished and elegant writer", there is no doubt that he took infinite pains with what he wrote, imitating now the bombastic manner of the later Roman rhetoricians, now the more chastened style of St. Jerome or the classic Latinity of Livy. Almost every page furnishes us with examples of the best, but also of the worst, diction. Solecisms and even barbarisms are by no means rare; but if we bear in mind that he lived at a time when, as Cardinal Newman says, "the very mention of education was a mockery, and the very aim and effort to exist was occupation enough for mind and body", we will not be surprised at his occasional grammatical blunders, but rather at the general excellence of his composition.

In spite of Fredegar's complaint that the world was in its dotage and that men were losing the keenness of intellect of

<sup>30</sup> The meter of these lines is heptapodic, the seventh foot being a trochee.

<sup>31</sup> *Vita Walarici*, C. 9. See also *V. Sadalbergae*, C. 3; *V. Agili*, C. 6; *V. Faronis*, C. 12.

<sup>32</sup> *V. Bedae opera*, t. III.

former times,<sup>88</sup> a certain revival of learning is nevertheless discernible in the Frankish dominions about the middle of the seventh century, and the honor of having brought it about belongs in no small measure to Jonas of Bobbio, the biographer of St. Columban.

<sup>88</sup> *Fredegarii Chronicon*, ed. Krusch, M. G. H. SS. Merov., II.

**PART I.**  
**IN THE ISLAND OF SAINTS AND SCHOLARS.**



## I.

### THE PROVIDENTIAL MISSION OF THE EARLY IRISH CHURCH.

THE Wandering of the Nations! What a medley of images this word calls up in our mind. It carries us back to the sunset of the old civilization; we rest for a while in the twilight, then grope about in the night, and emerge at last into the dawn—gray, indistinct, undefined—of a new social order.

As the great St. Benedict was one day seated at the gate of his monastery on the hill of Cassino, he saw approaching him a figure clad in royal robes. It was Totila, the greatest of the Ostrogoths after Theoderic, who came to the prophet of the Apennines, as Odoacer had come to the Austrian Hermit, Severinus, to ascertain what destiny Heaven had in store for him. "You have done much evil," answered the Saint, "you do it still every day; it is time that your iniquities should cease. You shall enter Rome; you shall cross the sea; you shall reign nine years, and the tenth you shall die". Totila was deeply moved, and, adds St. Gregory, "from that time on he was less cruel". History tells us how the prediction came true. Totila fell in battle against Narses in 552. Teias snatched the sword from the hands of the dying hero, but he too fell, and with him the Gothic empire. When Benedict beheld in vision the fall of the Goth, there loomed up, in the background, the dim outline of a fierce barbarian horde. Long beards swept their bosoms. Over the Alps they poured. Italians and Greeks were blown before them like chaff before the whirlwind. Monte Cassino lay in their way, and it was razed to the ground; but the lives of the inmates were spared, because the Patriarch had prayed for them. This was in 583, when St. Benedict had already been enjoying the reward of his labors for forty years.

The invasion of the Lombards was the last, but in many respects also the most tremendous, scourge with which the fair

provinces of Italy were visited. It was the most terrible, because it was the last; because the Visigoth and the Hun and the Vandal and the Herulian and the Ostrogoth and the Byzantine had devastated the land before him, the Lombard could in so short a time make the desolation so complete. "Sights and sounds of war," says St. Gregory the Great, who saw the last pillars and towers of the Roman world totter and fall under the stroke of the Lombard's sword and battle-axe, "sights and sounds of war meet us on every side. The cities are destroyed; the military stations broken up; the land devastated; the earth depopulated. No one remains in the country; scarcely any inhabitants in the towns; yet even the poor remains of human kind are still smitten daily and without intermission. Before our eyes some are carried away captive, some mutilated, some murdered. She herself, who once was the mistress of the world, we behold how Rome fares: worn down by manifold and incalculable distresses, the bereavement of citizens, the attack of foes, the reiteration of overthrows, where is her senate? Where are they who in a former day revelled in her glory? where is their pomp, their pride? Now no one hastens up to her for preferment; and so it is with other cities also; some places are laid waste by pestilence, others are depopulated by the sword, others are tormented by famine, and others are swallowed up by earthquakes."<sup>1</sup>

There was scarcely a province of the Roman world, but shared the fate of Italy. Asia Minor had been ravaged by the Goths; the Huns had poured down upon Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Syria, and Goths and Huns had spread terror and desolation over Greece and Illyria, Pannonia, and Noricum. The Goth and the Hun had driven the Burgundian and the Allamannian, the Frank, the Sueve, the Vandal and the Alan before them into Gaul and Spain, and then followed them to finish the work of destruction. When the barbarian torrent had spread from the banks of the Rhine to the Pillars of Hercules, it had overleaped the barrier of the sea: the Vandal had overrun Africa, and the Angles, Jutes and Saxons had descended on the southern coast of Britain, and had gradually

<sup>1</sup> Hom. in Ezech. 18 s. fin. Translat. from Newman, *Historical Sketches*, III, pp. 110 f.

driven the Celt into the mountain fastnesses of Wales and Cornwall or across the Channel into Armorica.

Here we have the explanation of the degradation of learning, sacred and profane, in the early Middle Ages. All that the Church could do was to maintain just enough schools to teach her ministers the essentials of doctrine and discipline, and give them such learning as would suffice to keep the Scriptures and Tradition intact. The imperial schools fell with the imperial power, and the Romans of that day had neither the ability nor the energy to restore them. They were only shadows of their former selves—wan figures flitting nervelessly about the desolated streets of the Eternal City. Once it was said that every Roman senator was a king; now not one was even a man. "As often as the Franks or Lombards expressed most bitter contempt of a foe, they called him a Roman," and it was a Lombard bishop who wrote: "In the word Roman we include whatever is base, whatever is cowardly, whatever is perfidious, the extremes of avarice and luxury, and every vice that can prostitute the dignity of human nature."<sup>2</sup> It seemed indeed as though Rome had proved faithless to the trust confided to her of civilizing the world. But it only seemed so, for it was from Rome that salvation went out to the nations in those direful times. When the decrease of the old world was at hand, it gave to posterity as a dying legacy, to be the progenitors of the new civilization, three men who built another Ark which bore the twin-treasures of Christianity and civilization over the raging billows of social revolution and the crash of empires. This ark was monasticism. The code of monastic education was framed by Cassiodorus, monk and statesman; St. Benedict presented to the world a system of discipline destined to reconquer it more effectually than the discipline of the Roman legions had conquered it, and St. Gregory the Great, the first monk and the first son of St. Benedict to occupy the throne of Peter, showed how kingdoms are won without the sword and the buckler, the galley and the battering-ram.

As Pope, St. Gregory did much for Rome and Italy, but his greatest glory lies in his title of Apostle of the West. Under

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 49.



his reign the Arians of Spain were reconciled to the Church, and the conquest of Britain, to use the words of Gibbon, reflects less glory on the name of Caesar, than on that of Gregory. Instead of six legions, forty monks were embarked for that distant island, and the Pontiff lamented the austere duties which forbade him to partake the perils of their spiritual warfare. The importance of the conversion of England cannot be overestimated. Although amongst the youngest of the Christian churches, she became the great base of operations for the spiritual conquests of the Papacy, the great centre of Christian missions.

But nearly a hundred years were to elapse before the Anglo-Saxon Church could send forth missionaries to the Continent to carry the light of faith and the flame of love into the cradle of their ancestors; and the sons of St. Benedict, driven from their home on Monte Cassino and battling for bare existence on the soil of Italy, far from being able to penetrate into the depths of the forests of central Europe, would soon see themselves constrained to abandon for a time even the spiritual conquest of Britain. It was the providential mission of the early Irish Church to complete the work begun by the Benedictines in England, and to prepare their way on the Continent. Her geographical position, the character of her people, the time and manner of introduction of Christianity, and the rapid development of monasticism—all these factors had combined to make Ireland the “storehouse”, as Cardinal Newman says, “of the past and the birth-place of the future”, a secure and tranquil retreat where “the Steward of the Household could safely deposit the riches which he had inherited from Jew and heathen, the things old and new, in an age in which each succeeding century threatened them with woes worse than the centuries which had gone before.”

Situated “in the ultimate places of the earth”,<sup>3</sup> Ireland, the “virgin land”, had escaped the political and social revolutions of the rest of Europe. No Roman proconsul had ever trod her soil; no Roman tax-collector had drained the life-blood of her children: she had remained a stranger to Roman civilization, but also to Roman degradation. The horrors

<sup>3</sup> St. Patrick, *Confessio*.

that accompanied the dismemberment of the giant fabric of the Roman world had not reached her shores: the Destroying Angel had passed her by, as though all her transoms and door-posts had been sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb. It was not until three hundred years after the death of the last Roman emperor, when she had fulfilled her providential mission, that Erin felt the tread of the conqueror's heel.

But though at no time politically subject to the Empire, Ireland was nevertheless drawn into spiritual union with it by adopting the Christian religion, which, through the act of Constantine, had become the official religion of the civilized world. It would have been surprising indeed if Christianity, which had become the dominant religion of Roman Britain, and had penetrated as far north as the Firths of Forth and Clyde before the end of the fourth century, had found no entrance into the sister island till the fifth century was well on its way. The commercial relations of Ireland with Britain, Gaul and Spain, the Irish settlements on the west coast of Britain, the periodical invasions of Wales and Scotland, and, above all the slave trade, not only brought the Irish into touch with Christianity in foreign parts, but must have also been the means of propagating it in their own land. But we also have positive evidence of the existence of Christian communities in Ireland before the arrival of Palladius and Patrick. St. Prosper of Aquitaine, who lived at the time of the events he records, tells us in his *Chronicle* that, in the year 431, Pope St. Celestine sent Palladius "to the Scots that believed in Christ,<sup>4</sup> to be their first bishop". It is possible that the Irish Christians had themselves asked for a bishop; for the Pope would hardly have sent them one unless they had intimated that they wanted one.<sup>5</sup> At all events, the sending of a bishop to Ireland justifies the conclusion that Christian communities of some importance had already grown up in the island. It would, however, be a grave mistake to suppose that the work of evangelization had already been far advanced in the year 431. For, aside from the fact that Prosper, in another connexion, speaks

<sup>4</sup> For many centuries the Irish were called Scots, and their land Scotia.

<sup>5</sup> Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 52, where the words of St. Celestine are quoted: "nullus invitis detur episcopus" (Ep. IV).

of Ireland as a "barbarous" land still to be Christianized, we know from the authentic writings of St. Patrick that the greater part of the island was still pagan in the second half of the fifth century.

Palladius ~~probably landed on the coast of the present County Wicklow and, after founding three little churches and~~ making some converts in that part of the country, traveled to the Picts of Dalaradia in the north of Ireland, where death surprised him. Tradition associated the name of the "phantom missionary" especially with the church in Cill Fine or Cill-Fine-Cormaic,<sup>6</sup> "the church of the clan of Cormac", where he is said to have left "his books and the casket with the relics of Paul and Peter, and the board on which he used to write". Whether the first bishop of Ireland was a Briton, a Gaul, or a Roman, it is impossible to say; nor can we form any judgment as to his qualifications for the giant task which he had undertaken. His sojourn in the land of the Scots was too short to leave more than a mere name behind: he began and ended his mission within a single year. It was not to him, but to Patrick, as the Irish afterwards said, that God had granted the conversion of Ireland.

St. Patrick<sup>7</sup> was born before the close of the fourth century, probably in the year 389. His father was a deacon and decurion or town-counsellor of Banaven Taberniae, a Roman fortress near Dumbarton on the Clyde. In his seventeenth year Patrick was captured by a band of Irish freebooters and carried into captivity in Ireland. During his six years of bondage "near the wood of Fochlad, nigh to the western sea", a great change came over him. Though he had been brought up a Christian, he had never given much serious thought to his religion; but now the Lord, as he says, opened the sense of his unbelief. The fear of God daily grew more and more in him, and in a single day he said as many as a hundred prayers.

<sup>6</sup> Near Colbinstown in Kildare on the borders of Wicklow (Bury).

<sup>7</sup> For the following sketch of St. Patrick's life and work I have consulted, besides the Saint's own writings, the Biographies by Prof. Bury and Dr. Healy, and Dom Gougaud's *Les Chrétientés Celtiques* (1911).

In the woods and on the mountains I've remained,  
And risen to prayer e'er daylight broke, through snow,  
Through frost, through rain, and yet I took no ill:  
Then was I swift where now the Spirit is slow;  
For 'twas the Spirit of God that in me burned.<sup>8</sup>

Escaping at last from his master, Patrick was taken on board a trading vessel bound for Gaul. The ship's crew, rough and ready heathens, made a kind of slave of him, and when they landed at some unfrequented port, they forced him to accompany them on a long march through a wild and uninhabited country. At the end of two months he escaped from his new masters and made his way to the famous monastery of Lérins where he probably sojourned for some years, enjoying the inestimable advantage of daily intercourse with the holy and learned men whom Honoratus had gathered about him on the "holy island"—Hilary of Arles, Lupus of Troyes, Eucherius of Lyons, Vincent, the author of the *Commonitorium*, Salvian, and Maximus. However profoundly the young Briton may have been drawn to the monastic life, God had other designs in his regard. Whilst on a visit to his relatives in Britain, he became conscious of his true vocation. "In a vision of the night," he says, "I saw a man, Victorius by name, who seemed to come from Ireland, and in his hand he held innumerable letters. And he gave me one of these, and I read the beginning of the letter, which contained the 'voice of the Irish'. And as I read the beginning of it, I fancied that I heard the voice of the folk who were near the wood of Fochlad, nigh to the western sea. And this was the cry: 'We pray thee, holy youth, to come and again walk amongst us as before.' I was pierced to the heart and could read no more; and thereupon I awoke."

Convinced that he was called by God to go as a missionary to the land of his former bondage, Patrick earnestly set to work to prepare himself for his life-work. His thoughts turned to Rome, the centre of Christendom. There he would find masters to instruct him in sacred science, and prudent men to guide and advise him, and, above all, the Successor of St. Peter to send him on his holy warfare with his sanction and

<sup>8</sup> St. Patrick, *Confessio*, Sir S. Ferguson's transl.

his blessing. But for some reason not known to us his journey came to an abrupt end at Auxerre, in northern Gaul, where he spent the next fifteen years of his life in prayer and study and the exercise of the functions of the deaconship under the holy bishops Amator and Germanus. He did not apparently make much progress in secular learning, but all the more in the science of the Saints. He could not write with any degree of elegance the language of Virgil and Cicero, but one book he mastered thoroughly—the Book of Books, the Holy Bible.

It was during Patrick's stay in Gaul that Germanus went on his mission to Britain to combat Pelagianism, and that Palladius was appointed bishop of Ireland. When the news of the premature death of Palladius reached Gaul, there was no doubt in the mind of Germanus as to who should succeed him: Patrick was ripe for the apostolate, and he conferred episcopal consecration on him immediately. Thus invested with the authority and office of the successors of the Apostles, Patrick set out with a few chosen companions and all things necessary for the worship and service of the Church for his distant field of labor (432).

Patrick landed in Wicklow, at the mouth of the Vartry river, and then made his way northward to Ulster, where he succeeded in converting the powerful chief Dichu, and founded the church of Sabhall Patrick, afterwards called Saul. His knowledge of the language and customs of the Irish stood him in good stead. He knew that the petty kings and chieftains were not only the political lords of the land, but also the sole possessors of the soil, and therefore alone in a position to make grants of suitable sites for ecclesiastical foundations. Hence we find him everywhere attempting their conversion before preaching to the common people. The conversion of a chief was often the signal for the conversion of the whole clan. When the chiefs refused to listen to his preaching, he tried to win them over by giving them presents. In Meath he met with an important success; for here he baptized Conall, the son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, and brother of Loigaire, the High King of Ireland. The young nobleman gave Patrick a place, near his own fortress, for the building of a church, which from its unusual size—twenty yards from end to end—was known as the Great Church of Patrick. Loigaire himself

remained a pagan to the end, and ordered his body to be buried with all the rites of his pagan ancestors.

After the nobles, the *fili* were the chief object of Patrick's solicitude. They were "men of dignity and consequence in the society of their tribes and country. They were not only poets but judges, for they possessed the legal lore which was perhaps preserved in poetical form. The administration of justice depended on their knowledge; their arbitrations were the substitute for a court of justice."<sup>9</sup> St. Patrick, it seems, converted the most celebrated poet and lawyer of his day, Dubthach, a member of the commission which compiled the *Senchus Mór*. A number of his pupils followed his example, one of them, Fíacc, surnamed the Fair, becoming bishop of Sletty in Leinster.

Another feature of Patrick's method of evangelization, which contributed in no small degree to the rapid propagation of Christianity, was his solicitude to create a native clergy. His first fellow-laborers were of various nationalities. An eighth-century document, the *Catalogue of Irish Saints*, speaks of Romans, Franks, Britons and Scots. About six years after his arrival in Ireland he was joined by Auxilius and Iserninus, whom he had known at Auxerre. Iserninus was of Irish birth, and was probably the first native Irishman to receive episcopal consecration. Besides Fíacc, who has already been mentioned, the records speak of two other Irishmen associated with St. Patrick: Benignus, whom he is said to have adopted as a young boy, who succeeded him in the see of Armagh, and Sac-hall, who accompanied him on his journey to Rome in 441.

Thoroughly acquainted as he was with the monastic system on the Continent, it was quite in the order of things that Patrick should establish monasteries in Ireland also. He himself speaks of "innumerable sons of Scots and daughters of kings who became monks and virgins of Christ". Monks are also mentioned by his biographers as pastors of early Christian communities. The first monasteries were in all probability mission stations, similar to those founded by St. Boniface in Germany in the eighth century, for the life of St. Patrick was, as Dr. Healy remarks, "too full of missionary labors to be

<sup>9</sup> Bury, l. c., p. 115.

given to the government or foundation of monasteries" on a large scale. It was only in the next generation that monasteries constituted the main feature of the ecclesiastical system, and became powerful centres of religious, intellectual and national life.

It was well for the Apostle of Ireland that he had been trained from the days of his youth in the rough school of adversity, and that he had learned from his Divine Master to bear patiently opposition and calumny even from the members of the household of the faith, for, like all the great servants of God, he was to be tried in the furnace of tribulation. Wherever he came to preach, the Druids, who, though exercising no sacerdotal functions and forming no regular organization, were nevertheless an influential body owing to their learning and their reputed magical powers, gathered from far and near to compass his ruin. Only too often they succeeded in prejudicing whole tribes against the missionaries, or in undoing the labors of many years by prevailing on some king or chief to banish the preachers of the new faith from his territory. In his *Confession* St. Patrick refers to twelve great perils through which he had passed. On one occasion he and his companions were seized, stripped of all their belongings, and kept for fourteen days in chains. But it was not the will of God that he should suffer a martyr's death, and, through the intervention of powerful friends, he was set free again, and all his property restored to him. Coroticus, the ruler of a small independent principality in northern Britain, on one of his raids on the Irish coast, carried off a number of newly-baptized Christians—"the holy oil of baptism was still wet upon their brows"—and when Patrick sent a messenger to him requesting him to send back the booty and to release the captives, mockery was the only answer he received. Nor is it probable that the indignant letter of protest which he addressed to the Christian subjects and soldiers of Coroticus in Strathclyde had any effect on the tyrant.

To perils from the Gentiles, and perils from robbers, were added, as in the case of St. Paul, perils from false brethren, and perils from his own nation. Amongst his British countrymen Patrick's glorious work in Ireland was regarded with envy and uncharitableness. Some reproached him with his

illiteracy, and others hinted that he had not gone forth to preach to the Scots with altogether unworldly motives. Worst of all, a once-trusted friend, to whom he had, before his ordination to deaconship, confessed a fault committed at the age of fifteen, betrayed the secret, and some of his ill-wishers made vile capital of his youthful indiscretion to cast discredit on his episcopate. His beautiful *Confession*, written in his old age, in the very face of death, contains the answer to these charges, and at the same time declares the wonderful providence of God toward him, and his own overflowing thankfulness for them.

The *Letter against Coroticus* and the *Confession* enable us to gain a fair idea of the success of St. Patrick's labors and of his heroic and saintly personality. He "confesses" that marvelous fruits have rewarded his efforts. He speaks of "multitudes of people re-born through him to God." But he humbly ascribes all the good he has done to the "gift" of God, undeservedly given. "I was like a stone," he says, "lying deep in a quagmire. The Almighty came and in His mercy took me up, and raised me on high, and placed me on the top of the wall." Humbly and reverently he traces God's guiding hand in the days of his youth, of his manhood and of his apostolate; and he never ceases to wonder that he of all men should have been chosen to be a light to the Gentiles and to extend the borders of the kingdom of God. How gladly he would have given his life for God. "I beg of God," he says, "to grant me the grace to shed my blood for His Name, even though I were to remain without burial, and this wretched body of mine were to be torn limb from limb by dogs or wild beasts, or were to be devoured by the birds of the air." Carnal motives did not determine him to come to Ireland. "I testify," he says, "in truth and in exultation of heart, before God and His holy angels, that I never had any motive save the Gospel and the promises of God, to return at any time to that people from which I had formerly escaped." Humility, simplicity, candor of soul, unalterable trust in God, strength of will, energy in action, prudence in his dealings with all classes of men, sympathy for the corporal and spiritual ills of his fellow men—these are the traits revealed in almost every line of his writings.



We can imagine the influence such a strong, ardent, spiritual personality must have exercised over the minds of the Gaels. St. Patrick did not, it is true, convert all the pagans of Ireland; but, as Dom Gougaud has justly remarked, he won such multitudes for Christ, he founded so many churches, ordained so many priests and bishops, and inflamed the hearts of his converts with such fervor and love that it is not too much to say that the flourishing state of the Irish Church in the centuries following his death were the direct results of his apostolate.<sup>10</sup>

Since Renan it has become almost a fashion with some writers to ascribe the rapid diffusion of Christianity among the Gaels to the spirit of conciliation of their apostles. If superstitions survived among the people, it was certainly not because they were countenanced by St. Patrick, but because many of them, such as the belief in the existence and the wonderful powers of the Sidhe, or fairies, were so deeply imbedded in the traditions of the Gaels that centuries of Christian preaching could not dislodge them. The missionaries made no effort to overturn the existing political organization of the land, and they wisely adapted the new religion, in its outward organization and methods of work, to the habits and ways of life of the people: a policy afterwards strongly recommended by St. Gregory the Great to the apostle of the Anglo-Saxons. The existence of the home-land of the Celtic gods, the Land of Heart's Delight, the Land of the Living, was not denied; many a trait even of that charming other world as drawn by the poet and the story teller, was borrowed for the Christian heaven. The fires lighted in honor of the midsummer sun were not extinguished, but they were henceforth lighted in honor of St. John the Baptist; the pillar-stones were not removed, but the sign of the cross was engraved upon them; the visiting of sacred fountains was not forbidden, because they had been converted into Holy Wells and baptismal fonts by the blessing of the Saints; under the sacred oaks hermits built their huts and served God in prayer and fasting, and the tonsure "from ear to ear" and the white garments of the Druids were transferred to the Christian monk. We know that St.

<sup>10</sup> *Les Chrétientés Celtiques*, p. 56.

Patrick did all in his power to break the influence of the Druids and to root out all idolatrous practices, but not a shadow of a proof can be adduced that he made a single concession to paganism in matters of doctrine. From the *Senchus Mór* we learn that when he formed an alliance with the *fili*, or poets, he made them give up every practice that involved a sacrifice to the demons; and according to another ancient document, the *Glossary of Cormac*, he said that "whoever continues to observe the ancient rites will possess neither heaven nor earth, for to practise them is to renounce baptism".<sup>11</sup>

Some years before his death St. Patrick resigned the see of Armagh, which he had founded in 444. It is probable that he spent the remaining years of his life at Saul, in Dalaradia. Here he died in 461, and was most fittingly interred in the first church which he had founded after his arrival in Ireland.

Before the great apostle closed his eyes in death, the legend says he begged God to show him the results of his labors. His prayer was heard. He was transported in spirit to the top of a very high mountain, and he saw the whole island spread out before him, and all the hills, and valleys, and rivers, and lakes aglow with the sacred fire of divine faith. It was the picture of Christian Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries as it appeared to the Angels and Saints of God whenever they looked down upon earth from their golden thrones. The hearths on which the fires burned so brightly were the monasteries of men and women, which spread like a net-work over the length and breadth of the land.

"During the sixth and seventh centuries," says Döllinger, "the Church of Ireland stood in the full beauty of its bloom. The spirit of the Gospel operated amongst the people with a vigorous and vivifying power; troops of holy men, from the highest to the lowest ranks of society, obeyed the counsel of Christ, and forsook all things, that they might follow Him. There was no country of the world, during this period, which could boast of pious foundations or of religious communities equal to those that adorned this far distant land. The schools in the Irish cloisters were at this time the most celebrated in all the West. Whilst almost the whole of Europe was deso-

<sup>11</sup> Gougaud, l. c., p. 58.

lated by war, peaceful Ireland, free from the invasions of external foes, opened to the lovers of learning and piety a welcome asylum. The stranger who visited the island, not only from the neighboring shores of Britain, but also from the remote nations of the Continent, received from the Irish people the most hospitable reception, a gratuitous entertainment, free instruction, and even the books that were necessary for their instruction." <sup>12</sup>

Much speculation has been indulged in by various writers in order to explain the prodigious development of monasticism in the early Irish Church. According to some the monasteries were nothing but Christianized Druidical confraternities. The Druids, these writers pretend, went over to Christianity in a body, and their colleges became, under the influence of Christianity, centres of proselytism and of flourishing intellectual culture. Unfortunately for this otherwise seductive theory, we know that, during the lifetime of St. Patrick and long after his death, the Druids were the most formidable and intractable foes of Christianity, and no evidence has thus far been produced for the existence of local associations or communities of Druids in Ireland.

Others, no doubt in order to give color to their theory of a Rome-free Celtic Church, maintain that monasticism was introduced into Ireland direct from the East. There is no doubt whatever that the writings of the founders of Oriental monasticism were known in Ireland, and that certain peculiarities of Oriental, especially of Egyptian, asceticism were imitated in the Irish monasteries; but it is equally undeniable that the island Celts were indebted for their acquaintance with the monastic traditions of the East to the monks of Lerins, to Rufinus, the translator of the Rule of St. Basil, and to Cassian's works on the cenobites of Syria and Egypt.

But whatever may have been the origin of Irish monasticism, whether it was introduced into the island in pre-Patrician times, or brought by St. Patrick himself from Gaul, or by some of his British auxiliaries from Wales, the causes of its extraordinary development must be looked for in the fiery zeal of

<sup>12</sup> Döllinger, *Gesch. der Christ. Kirche*, I, 2, p. 185. Cf. Newman, *Hist. Sketches*, III, p. 125.

the early missionaries, who did all in their power to induce the people to follow not only the precepts but also the counsels of the Gospel; in the ardent temperament of the Gaels themselves, who, in the first fervor of their re-birth in Christ, were as eager to embrace the religious life out of love for their Heavenly King as the early Christians had been to lay down their lives for Him; and, finally, in the political and social condition of the country, which, by promoting individualism and decentralization, was responsible for the prodigious multiplication of monastic institutions. Ireland was divided into a large number of small districts, each of which was owned by a tribe, the aggregate of a number of clans or families which believed that they were descended from a common ancestor. When a king or chief was converted, he as a rule devoted a portion of the tribal property, or of his own private property, to ecclesiastical purposes. Churches arose on these estates, and in most cases monastic colonies grew up round them. In the course of time there were as many monasteries in Ireland as there were tribes. As there were no cities in the island in those days, these monastic foundations became the ecclesiastical centres, the seats of the bishops. When new monasteries were founded, they determined to have bishops of their own, and to be quite independent of the bishops of the dioceses in which they were situated. In this way the practice of consecrating bishops without sees was introduced, and before long, what had been but the exception became the rule. The influence of the existing sees gradually declined; the abbots became of more account than the bishops, to whom little more than the essence of their office was left, and before the close of the fifth century the organization of the Church had assumed an almost exclusively monastic character.<sup>13</sup>

The monastery of Killeany, in the Bay of Galway, is generally looked upon as the first of those great monastic institutions which were the glory of Ireland in the sixth century. Its founder, St. Enda, or Enna (d. 542?), was the chief of a

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bury, l. c., pp. 179 ff. "On the one hand there was a bond of various degrees of intimacy connecting the religious community with the tribe; and on the other hand, the community took upon itself the form and likeness of a tribe or clan, its members being regarded as the family or followers of its head."

powerful clan. After his baptism he betook himself to the "Great Monastery" at Whiterne in Galloway.<sup>14</sup> Having obtained a grant of Great Aran Island from the king of Cashel, he opened a monastery there which was soon filled to overflowing by students from all parts of Ireland. Some of the greatest saints and abbots of the time, such as Brendan of Clonfert, Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, Finnian of Moville, and Columba of Iona, received their early training in Killeany, and the once desolate spot became such a fruitful nursery of religion and learning that it was known as Aran na Naomh, or Aran of the Saints, and the "Sun of all the West".

The most important centre of monastic life, however, was Clonard, in Meath, founded by St. Finnen about the year 527. "Here were educated and trained for monastic and missionary work many of the most illustrious fathers of the Irish Church, including the Twelve Apostles of Erin; so that St. Finnen, who was a bishop, is called 'a doctor of wisdom, and the tutor of the saints of Ireland in his time'."<sup>15</sup> In 544 St. Ciaran founded Clonmacnoise, on the left bank of the Shannon, which rivalled in time the fame of Clonard itself; Glendalough was founded by St. Kevin in 549; Clonfert in 552 by St. Brendan the Navigator; Durrow in 553 by St. Columba, and in 558 St. Comgall founded Bangor, in the Ards of Ulster, not far from Moville, where his friend Finnian had settled in 540.

From these and countless other institutions of greater or less repute holy and learned men went forth in all directions, destroying the remnants of paganism and garnering rich harvests of souls for Christ. Toward the end of the sixth century, when the great body of the Irish had been safely sheltered in the True Fold, hundreds of devoted missionaries left their native shores to proclaim the faith, to establish or reform monasteries, and to found seats of learning in distant lands, and thus became, as Döllinger says, the benefactors of almost every nation of Europe.

<sup>14</sup> On Wigton Bay. The church (and monastery), dedicated to St. Martin, and said to have been founded by St. Ninian, was called "Candida Casa", from the white appearance of the stone material, as compared with the usual wooden buildings.

<sup>15</sup> Joyce, *A Smaller Social Hist. of Ireland*, p. 138.

~~The stream that issued from the Irish cloisters branched off in two main directions, spreading its golden waves over the islands of the North, on the one hand, and over the countries of western and southern Europe, on the other.~~ In 565 St. Columba, a native of Donegal, founded the monastery of Iona, and evangelized northern and western Scotland. From Iona St. Aidan was sent in 635, at the request of King Oswald of Northumbria "to instruct the English nation in Christ". On his arrival, the king gave him the island of Lindisfarne for his episcopal see, and the abbey which he founded there soon became the centre of a flourishing Church. "Many came daily into Britain from the country of the Scots," says the Venerable Bede, "and with great devotion preached the Word to those provinces of the English over which King Oswald reigned, and those among them that had received priest's orders administered the grace of baptism to the believers. Churches were built in divers places; the people joyfully flocked together to hear the Word; lands and other property were given of the king's bounty to found monasteries; English children, as well as their elders, were instructed by their Scottish teachers in study and the observance of monastic discipline."<sup>16</sup>

Whilst St. Columba was engaged in the blessed work of bringing over the Picts to the Christian faith and training the monks who were to become the apostles of Northumbria, another great Irish saint, Columba the Younger, or Columbanus, left his cell in Bangor to preach the Gospel and to plant monasteries in the forests of France and Germany and in the mountains of Switzerland and Italy.

<sup>16</sup> Bede, *H. E.*, III, 3 (Transl. Sellar).

## II.

### THE VOCATION OF COLUMBAN.

COLUMBAN'S<sup>1</sup> home was the southeastern part of Ireland, the ancient kingdom of Laigin, which roughly corresponds to the modern province of Leinster.<sup>2</sup> Here he was born before the middle of the sixth century, probably in the year 542. To all appearances his parents belonged to one of the higher social grades of their tribe, either to the nobles (flaiths), who had lands of their own, or to the class of non-noble freemen who had wealth in cattle and other movable property (Bo-aíres). Tradition is altogether silent in regard to his father, and the scanty details that have reached us about his mother do not enable us to delineate her character. We can infer that she was a virtuous Christian mother, sensitive and affectionate, but not possessed of the heroic spirit of sacrifice that afterwards distinguished her son. Before the birth of her child she received an intimation of his future greatness. In a vision of the night it seemed to her that a star of marvelous beauty went out from her and filled the whole world with its brightness. The wise men to whom she told her dream had no difficulty in expounding its meaning to her. Recalling the words of the Saviour: "The just shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father";<sup>3</sup> and the similar words of the song of Debbara: "Let them that love Thee shine as the sun shineth in his rising";<sup>4</sup> they said that a son would be born to her who would fill the world with the light of his holiness, and direct the feet of many into the way of salvation.

<sup>1</sup> This Irish name would probably have been Colum or Colman. He himself wrote Columba; his biographer Columba and Columbanus.

<sup>2</sup> The province of Leinster includes the old kingdom of Meath.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. 13:43.

<sup>4</sup> Judges 5:31.

It was customary among the Irish, especially of the higher ranks, to send their children to be reared and educated in the homes and with the families of other members of their tribe. The child, during fosterage, was treated in all respects like the children of the house: he worked at some appropriate employment or discharged some suitable function for the benefit of the foster-father; and he had to be educated in a way that suited his station in life.<sup>5</sup> Columban's parents appear to have departed from this practice of their country in his case; for we are told that his mother would not even entrust him to the care of her nearest relatives. He was a child of promise, predestined by God for great things, and she was convinced that only a mother's hand was fit to guide his infant steps and to fashion his tender heart.

Columban probably received his first lessons in reading and writing in the home circle. His teacher may have been one of the numerous class of ollaves, or doctors of poetry and history, who went through the country at certain intervals with a retinue of disciples, and visited the kings and chiefs one after another, dispensing their knowledge in return for hospitality and generous fees.<sup>6</sup> Afterwards he attended one of the monastic or lay schools of the neighborhood, where he applied himself so assiduously to his studies that he made rapid progress in literature and in the works of the Grammarians.

As he passed from boyhood to youth, his singular beauty of form and feature exposed him to many temptations from his countrywomen. His nobler nature indeed revolted against the allurements of sensuality, but in his lower faculties he felt that same "sting of the flesh" which had so frightened the Apostle of the Gentiles that he had thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from him.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps in his boyish thoughtlessness he had not placed all too watchful a guard over his eyes; or perhaps he had been too free in his intercourse with his fair neighbors—but whether he had courted temptation, or temptation had been thrust upon him through no fault of his, the danger was there, and had to be met. He

<sup>5</sup> Joyce, *Social History of Ireland* (Pop. ed.), p. 286. For an example of fosterage in the case of a king's son see Adamnan, *Vit. Col.*, I, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Joyce, l. c., p. 187.

<sup>7</sup> II Cor. 12: 7, 8.



bent to his work with redoubled ardor; he plunged into the study of rhetoric and geometry, and diligently conned the pages of Holy Writ; he armed himself, says his biographer, "with the buckler of the Gospel and the double-edged sword of prayer and action". But all his efforts were in vain—the old serpent continued to tempt and harass him, and the gift of beauty threatened to become a "fatal gift" indeed.

It was during this fierce wrestling against carnal desires, when he became painfully conscious of his frailty and proneness to sin, that the thought of leaving the world and embracing the monastic life occurred to him for the first time. The crisis of his life had come. He had arrived at the parting of the ways, and, like the hero of old, he paused to consider what course he should follow. Love of home and country, bright prospects of wealth and honors, the rewards of talents well employed, the fear of wounding the tender heart of a mother who clung to him with every fibre of her being, were so many arguments for remaining in the world. Besides, could he not, like so many others, like his own parents, work out his salvation without the tonsure and the cowl? On the other hand, he considered how much easier it would be to save his soul far from the enticements of the world; and what were honors and high station compared with the imperishable laurels won in the service of God?

Unable to come to a definite decision himself, Columban resolved to ask the advice of a holy recluse, who spent her days and nights in fasting and prayer in a little hermitage at some distance from his home. Accordingly he laid his whole heart bare to her, telling her of his temptations and struggles, of the risings and fallings of his spirit, of his anxieties for the future, and of his half-formed resolution to quit the world. "Fifteen years ago," she replied, "I left my father's house and sought out this place of pilgrimage to fight against temptation and sin. In all that time I have never once looked back, and the weakness of my sex has alone prevented me from crossing the sea and looking out for a still more advantageous field of battle. And thou, inflamed by the fires of youth, remainest upon thy native soil! Hast thou forgotten Adam, Samson, David and Solomon, all conquered by the seductions of unholy love? Away, young man, away, flee from the snares in

which you see so many hopelessly entangled! Turn aside from the path that leads to the gates of Hell!"<sup>8</sup>

The passionate appeal of the holy woman sank deep into Columban's soul. The words he had heard were hard, but their harshness was mingled with sweetness, for they were but the echo of the words of Christ: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" Clearly, the voice he had heard was the voice of God; and with the energy and resolution that characterized his whole after life he determined to follow it without delay. Hurriedly thanking his uncompromising monitress, he hastened to take leave of his friends and comrades, and to make known his resolve to his mother.

To a young man who had accompanied him to the East and had promised to share the privations of the desert with him, but who had afterwards given up his resolution because his widowed sister had asked him to undertake the education of her little son, St. Jerome addressed the following lines: "Even though your little nephew were to cling to your neck; even though your mother were to stand before you and with disheveled hair and rent garments were to conjure you by the breasts which had nourished you; even though your father were to bar your way with his body, pass over him, and, without so much as shedding a tear, rush to the standard of the Cross: in such cases cruelty is true filial love."<sup>9</sup> Little did the great Doctor think, when penning this stern advice, that two hundred years later a young Irish lad would carry it out to the very letter.

When Columban told his mother that he was about to leave her forever, she was inconsolable. He had been her hope, her joy, her pride, and now she was to see his face no more. Her maternal love made her deaf to all higher considerations. Weeping and sobbing, she begged him not to leave her alone in her widowhood. But neither her tears nor her entreaties could shake his resolution. "Have you not heard," was his

<sup>8</sup> These words of the Recluse suggested to Clemens Brentano the beautiful poem beginning with the lines:

"Gehör der Welt nicht an,  
Sonst ist's um dich geton."

<sup>9</sup> *Ep. ad Heliodorum* (Migne, *P. Lat.*, 22, col. 348).

only answer, "the words of the Saviour: 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me'?"<sup>10</sup> And when she placed herself before the doorway to prevent his going out, he earnestly besought her to let him depart. "Never!" she replied, and in sheer despair threw herself down upon the threshold. Without a moment's hesitation he stepped over her prostrate form, and hurried on his way. Mother and son were not to see each other again in this world.

Those who judge all things according to this world's standard alone will call the action of Columban unnatural in the highest degree, the product of an overwrought fancy. They will reproach him with insensibility and want of filial affection. But then "the world is blind", as Marco the Lombard assured Dante; those who tear themselves from wife and child to seek the bubble reputation in the cannon's mouth or in the frozen Polar Seas, it calls heroes; whereas those who fly from all they prize the most in this life to fight the battles of God, it calls fools. "The word of the Cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, it is the power of God."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Matth. 10:37.

<sup>11</sup> I Cor. 1:18.

### III.

#### COLUMBAN AT CLUAIN-INIS.

AFTER the heart-rending parting from his mother Columban turned his steps northward, to the kingdom of Oriel. On Cleenish Island (Cluain-Inis) in Lough Erne, near the present town of Enniskillen, Sinell, a disciple of St. Finnen of Clonard, had some years previously founded a monastery and school, which already enjoyed a widespread reputation for piety and learning. Here the fugitive found "holy welcome and kind protection", and in the Abbot a teacher of rare ability, who was especially distinguished among the scholars of his time for his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

When Sinell perceived that his new pupil was uncommonly intelligent and extremely eager to learn, he bestowed special care on his instruction. It was his custom to question his hearers frequently in the course of his lectures, in order to keep them on the alert and to stimulate their initiative. Columban answered the most difficult questions with a readiness and depth of comprehension that elicited the admiration of his fellow-students and gladdened the heart of his master.

We do not know how long Columban remained in Cluain-Inis, but his stay must have extended over a period of several years, for he not only finished the prescribed course of studies, but even applied himself to the composition of literary works of various kinds.

The extant writings of our Saint give us a fair idea of the nature and extent of the learning imparted in the Irish monastic schools of the sixth century. He had acquired an extensive practical knowledge of Latin, being able to write it with spirit and uniform correctness, if not with classic elegance and simplicity. He had been carefully drilled in the rules of prosody, and wrote faultless hexameters and adonics. He

<sup>1</sup> *Jonas. Vit. Col.*, I, 3.

had studied the works of the great Fathers of the West, especially those of St. Jerome, and was familiar with the writings of the best pagan and Christian poets and historians. His poems and letters are interspersed with quotations from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Lucan, Persius, Sallust, Seneca, Cato, Ausonius, Caecilius, Balbus, Sixtus the Pythagorean,<sup>2</sup> Prudentius, Juvenicus, and Sedulius. He was acquainted with the writings of Gildas and Cassian, and with Rufinus's translations of Eusebius and Basil the Great.

Not a few writers maintain that Greek was already taught in the Irish schools in the sixth century. "We have ample evidence," says Dr. Joyce,<sup>3</sup> "that both the Latin and Greek languages and literatures were studied with success in Ireland from the sixth to the tenth century." Some even pretend that all the monks who accompanied Columban to the Continent had a fair knowledge of Greek, could transcribe Greek manuscripts, and read the Gospels in the original. The few Hellenisms met with in the genuine writings of Columban and in the *Altus Prosator* ascribed to St. Columcille are, however, the only evidence thus far adduced in proof of this contention. Columban, it is true, knows that the Greek for *columba* (dove) is *peristerá* (περιστέρα), and he uses the word *chilosum*, which is derived from the Greek word *cheilos* (χείλος, lip). But surely this does not prove that he had studied the Greek language and literature, any more than the fact that he renders the Hebrew *Bargoma* by the Latin *vilis columba* proves that he knew Hebrew. St. Jerome furnished him with the meaning of *Iona* and *Bariona*, and a glossary, or a collection of Greek and Latin words no doubt rendered him the same service for *peristerá*. Until further evidence to the contrary is produced, it seems safe to say that Greek was not seriously studied in Ireland until the eighth and ninth centuries, when such scholars as Sedulius and John Scotus Erigena astonished their contemporaries by the ease with which they wrote Greek or translated the most difficult Greek works into Latin.<sup>4</sup> Considering the close relations which

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Rufinus.

<sup>3</sup> *Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, p. 175.

<sup>4</sup> See the eulogy of Anastasius the Liberian (9th cent.) on Erigena's translation of the Pseudo-Areopagite (*Pat. Lat.*, t. 129, col. 739).

were maintained in the latter part of the seventh century between the Sister Islands of the North, the impetus given to the study of Greek in England by Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his companion, Hadrian, must have been felt in Ireland, too, and all the more profoundly and lastingly, because the conditions were more favorable.

Consistently with their Christianity, the founders of the Irish monastic schools made the Holy Scriptures the chief subject of study, to which all the arts and sciences were ancillary—the vestibule, as it were, of the sacred palace. The classics of Rome were not studied and copied and re-copied for their own sake, but because they furnished valuable aids to a better understanding of the Books of the Old and New Testaments and their commentators. The life of St. Columcille furnishes us with a characteristic instance of the extreme care with which the Scriptures were transcribed in the monasteries. “One day Baithene, coming to the Saint, says: ‘I have need of one of the Brethren to look over with me and to revise the Psalter which I have written.’ Having heard which, the Saint thus speaks: ‘Why dost thou bring this trouble upon us without cause? For in this thy Psalter, of which thou speakest, not one superfluous letter will be found, nor is any wanting except the vowel “I”, which alone is missing.’ And so the whole Psalter having been read through, it was found on examination to be as the Saint had foretold.”<sup>5</sup> St. Columcille himself made transcription one of his chief duties. On the very day of his death he was engaged in copying the Psalter, and he instructed his successor, Baithene, to complete it.

The transcribed volumes, especially if intended for presents, or for the use of the sanctuary, were often gorgeously ornamented, illuminated, and bound, and at times even enriched with gold and silver plates and precious stones. The most beautifully written book in existence, the Book of Kells, a vellum manuscript of the Four Gospels, is the work of an Irish artist of the eighth century.

The thousands of strangers who flocked to the Irish schools from England and the Continent did not come to study Gram-

<sup>5</sup> Adamnan, *Vit. Col.*, I, 23 (Transl. by Huyshe).

mar or Rhetoric, Astronomy or Geometry: "they retired thither," as the Venerable Bede says, "either for the sake of sacred studies, or of a more ascetic life". Agilbert, a native of Gaul, we are told, "lived a long time in Ireland, for the purpose of reading the Scriptures".<sup>6</sup> The Saxons Egbert and Ceadda spent many years there "in prayer and self-denial and meditation on the Holy Scriptures". St. Wilbrord, the Apostle of the Frieslanders, St. Wictbert, who had made the first attempt to convert the pagans on the lower Rhine, the two Hewalds, who in 690, went as messengers of the Gospel to the German Saxons, and received from them the crown of martyrdom, had all gone to Ireland for the sake of study and a stricter life, and were all remarkable for their knowledge of the Scriptures.<sup>7</sup>

The Scriptures occupying such a preëminent place in the curriculum of the Irish schools, it was only natural that Columban should devote himself heart and soul to their study. We have seen that he began the *lectio divina*, the "divine reading", as the Saints of those days lovingly called the study of the divine thought embodied in the sacred text and its commentators, at a very early age; but it was in the school of Sinell that he acquired that profound knowledge of the Sacred Books which characterizes all his writings. His familiarity with the Bible was indeed nothing short of marvelous. In a letter dashed off in great haste to his monks we find no less than twenty-nine quotations taken from seventeen books of the Old and New Testaments. Another letter, written on the eve of his death to Pope Boniface IV, is literally crowded with Scriptural sentences and phrases; and the same can be said of his Monastic Rule and of several of his Poems and Conferences.

It was at the school of Sinell, too, that Columban began to commit the results of his Scriptural studies to writing. "So rich was the treasure of the Divine Scriptures hidden in his heart," says his biographer, "that he composed, when still a

<sup>6</sup> In an ancient life of St. Sulgen, who lived in the 11th cent., we read the lines:

"Exemplo Patrum commotus amore legendi,  
Ivit ad Hibernos sophia mirabile Claros."

<sup>7</sup> Bede, *H. E.*, III, 3, 7, 27; IV, 3; V, 9, 10.

young man, a Commentary on the Psalms in a highly finished style." <sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly this is the work mentioned in a ninth-century catalogue of the library of St. Gall, and in a tenth-century catalogue of Bobbio. When that indefatigable Irish Franciscan, Patrick Fleming, visited these monasteries in 1625, both manuscripts had already disappeared, and no one could give him any information as to their whereabouts. About seventy-five years later, Muratori discovered a very ancient commentary on the Psalms in the Ambrosian Library of Milan among the manuscripts which had formerly belonged to Bobbio. The original title-page and preface were missing, and a fifteenth-century copyist had ascribed the work to St. Jerome, probably because the same codex contained a number of genuine writings of that Father. Dom Vallarsi showed conclusively that it could not have been written by St. Jerome, and suggested St. Columban as the author. His arguments, however, are not very convincing. The style of the commentary bears some resemblance to that of Columban; but, as other internal evidence seems to point to a southern country rather than to the British Isles as the home of the author, the circumstances of its having been transcribed and provided with Irish glosses by a monk of Bobbio in the eighth century, is hardly a sufficient reason to set it down as the work of the great founder of Bobbio. <sup>9</sup> The libraries of St. Gall and Bobbio, we know, were sadly pillaged and scattered toward the close of the Middle Ages, and the carelessness of the despoilers in handling their precious booty was, no doubt, responsible for the loss not only of Columban's Commentary on the Psalms, but also of the Hymns and Treatises which his biographer says he wrote while at the monastery of Cluain-Inis. <sup>10</sup>

When Columban had graduated, to use a modern term, at the school of Sinell, he turned his attention to the choice of a monastic society that would best correspond to his ascetical ideal. We do not know why he did not join the monks of

<sup>8</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Krusch, Introd. to his edition of the *Vita Columbani*, p. 18 f.; also Dom Gougaud, *Les Chrétientés Celtiques*, p. 258.

<sup>10</sup> The Bobbio Commentary on the Psalms has been published, together with the Irish glosses by G. T. Ascoli, *Il codice Irlandese dell' Ambrosiana*, Rome, 1878. Specimens of the Latin text are reprinted in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, XXVI, col. 815. See also Zeuss, *Grammatica Celtica* (ed. Ebel, 1871, pp. 1043-1048).



Sinell. Perhaps he thought that Cluain-Inis was too near to the scenes of his childhood and youth; perhaps he longed for a stricter rule of life than that enjoined by his saintly master.

At this time all Ireland was resounding with the praises of the new monastery of Bangor, of the sanctity and learning of its founder, St. Comgall, and of the severity of his discipline. Hundreds of young men were daily leaving their homes to place themselves under his guidance. Carried away by the general enthusiasm, Columban bade farewell to Lough Erne, slung his satchel of books over his shoulder, and wended his way to the Ards of Ulster.

#### IV.

##### LEARNING THE SCIENCE OF THE SAINTS AT BANGOR. THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE LORD.

**B**ANGOR was a typical early Irish monastic settlement. Grouped about a number of small, unpretentious oratories of wood or dry-piled stone were hundreds of wicker-work huts, circular or rectangular in shape. The larger ones served as guest-houses, workshops, kitchens, refectories, barns, etc.; the smaller ones were the cells of the monks, each affording accommodations for one or more persons. Somewhat apart from the rest, near one of the oratories, stood the cell of the abbot. It was also of wood, but, being built on an eminence and raised from the ground on tree-stumps, it made more show than its fellows and commanded a good view of the surroundings. The whole group of buildings was surrounded by a strong rampart of palisades or stone.

Such monasteries were speedily built. A fort of pagan times, abandoned by its former occupants and given or sold to the monks by the local chief, offered a suitable site and a ready-made enclosure. With the assistance of the people of the neighborhood the oratories and the principal buildings were constructed of whatever material was at hand. Each new arrival built his own cell with wattles and twigs gathered in the fields and woods, and roofed it with thatch furnished by the monastery or the neighboring peasantry.

The interior arrangements of the cells were of the most primitive simplicity. A rude bench, a table, half a dozen waxed tablets, a few strips of vellum or parchment made from the skins of sheep, goats, or calves, a sharp-pointed style of metal, a number of goose-quills, and an ink-horn—there was nothing else at all in the room, except perhaps a satchel with a book or two suspended from the low roof. His mantle laid on a little straw or rushes was the monk's bed; if, indeed, he did not prefer to sleep on the bare ground.

According to the life of St. Comgall, confirmed by an eighth century liturgical treatise, the population of Bangor, during the lifetime of the founder, amounted to about three thousand persons. This figure will not appear exaggerated if we remember that tradition assigns the same number to Clonard, and from three hundred to fifteen hundred to a number of other Irish monasteries of the sixth century. St. Bede tells us that in Welsh Bangor, at the beginning of the seventh century, there was so great a number of monks, that the monastery was divided into seven parts, none of which contained less than three hundred men. St. Serapion of Thmuis was surrounded by thousands of disciples; and we know on trustworthy authority that the monastic colony of Tabennae, in Upper Egypt, numbered nearly seven thousand members at the death of St. Pachomius.

Each Irish monastery appears to have followed a rule of its own, which would naturally resemble in many respects the rule of the monastery in which the founder had been initiated into the religious life. Thus there was a general family resemblance between all the monastic rules of Ireland, Wales and Scotland, for most of the great Irish founders had spent some years at St. David's or at Whithorn.

Unfortunately only a few scattered fragments of these early monastic rules have come down to us. The "Rule" ascribed to this or that Saint was in most cases no rule at all in the strict sense of the word: it meant merely the ascetical teaching of the Saint, orally communicated; or, at most, the traditions of a monastery originating in the ascetical practices introduced by its founder and exemplified in his life. Among the fragments of rules written in old Irish verse, there is also one attributed to St. Comgall. Even if it is authentic, it could not have been the "Rule of Life" prescribed for the monks of Bangor, for it is nothing but a brief collection of aphorisms and pious exhortations. But whatever may have been the exact nature of the Rule followed by the disciples of St. Comgall, we know from the beautiful stanzas in the Antiphony of Bangor, which celebrate its praises, that it was an excellent guide to the higher life:

Benchuir bona regula,  
 Recta atque divina,  
 Stricta, sancta, sedula,  
 Summa, justa ac mira.

Navis nunquam turbata  
 Quamvis fluctibus tonsa,  
 Nuptiis quoque parata  
 Regi Domino sponsa.

Domus dilicis plena  
 Super petram constructa  
 Necnon vinea vera  
 Ex Aegypto transducta.

Certe civitas firma,  
 Fortis atque munita,  
 Gloriosa ac digna,  
 Super montem posita.

Christo regina apta  
 Solis luce amicta,  
 Semplex semulque apta  
 Undecumque invicta.

Virgo valde fecunda  
 Haec et mater intacta,  
 Leta ac tremebunda,  
 Verbo Dei subacta.

Cui vita beata  
 Cum perfectis futura,  
 Deo Patre parata  
 Sine fine mansura.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Antiphonary of Bangor*, Ed. Warren. "The Rule of Bangor is good, correct, and divine, holy, constant, and exalted, just and admirable. It is a ship dashed by the waves, but never overturned; a bride prepared to celebrate her nuptials with the King. A house full of delights and solidly builded on a rock. . . . A strong city, built on a mountain, glorious to look upon. . . . A safe retreat, where the Saviour shelters His Father's flock. . . ." The Hymn is written in the same metre as Prudentius's *Cathemerinon* (Iambi dimeter catalect.). Characteristic are the alternate feminine rimes.

Navis nunquám turbáta  
 Quamvis fluctibus tónsa,  
 Nuptiis quoqué paráta  
 Regi domíno spónsa.

Poverty, chastity, and obedience, the three evangelical counsels, formed the basis of the monastic life in Bangor as elsewhere. Without the permission of the Abbot, we read in the collection of canons commonly known as the *Hibernensis*, no monk shall dare to dispose of anything he may possess, either during his lifetime or at the hour of his death.<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the Irish monks of Lindisfarne, the Venerable Bede says that "they had no money, but only cattle; and if they received any money from rich persons, they immediately gave it to the poor, or used it to ransom such as had been wrongfully sold for slaves. They were so purified from all taint of avarice that none of them received lands and possessions for building monasteries, unless they were compelled to do so by the temporal authorities. The place which they governed shows how frugal and temperate they were, for there were very few houses besides the church found at their departure; indeed, no more than were barely sufficient to make civilized life possible."<sup>3</sup>

Strict obedience was enjoined on all. The monk must obey his abbot as unhesitatingly, says an Irish synod, as the slave obeys his master; he shall not even express a wish in regard to the place of his burial.<sup>4</sup> The true monk must have no will of his own, but must come and go as a child.

Sins against chastity were severely punished. A canon ascribed to St. Patrick expressly forbids persons consecrated to God to marry, and visits them with excommunication if they prove unfaithful to their vow of celibacy. Another ancient canon forbids a monk and a nun to alight at the same inn, to drive in the same chariot, or to engage in prolonged conversations.<sup>5</sup> Mindful of the promise of Christ, that the pure of heart shall see God, the monk was required to be pure in thought, in word, and in action.

Although certain writers have attempted to prove the contrary, there is no doubt whatever that the monks bound themselves by vow to observe the evangelical counsels. This was called taking the "monastic vow", or the "vow of perfec-

<sup>2</sup> Wasserschleben, *Irische Kanonensammlung*, Liber XLI, c. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Bede, *H. E.*, III, 4, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Wasserschleben, l. c., XVIII, c. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Gougaud, l. c., p. 90.

tion".<sup>6</sup> The ceremony of profession was solemn and public, as we learn from Gildas, who took a certain Maglocunus to task for proving unfaithful to the monastic life which he had embraced in his youth, reminding him of the vows he had pronounced "in the presence of God Almighty and before the faces of angels and men".<sup>7</sup>

The life led by the monks of St. Comgall was so perfect that the people called Bangor the "Valley of the Angels". According to another saying the three orders of perfection were found united in the monks of Bangor: they were like unto the angels on account of their purity; they shone like the apostles by their zeal, and were martyrs in desire, being ever ready to shed their blood for Christ.<sup>8</sup> There is a pretty story told of St. Luan, a contemporary of St. Columban, which beautifully illustrates the spirit that reigned in those days in Bangor. Having left his father's flocks to become a monk, he devoted himself with such ardor to the study of the Sacred Scriptures that St. Comgall thought it his duty to remind him of the dangers which oftentimes attend over-zealous pursuit of knowledge. "If I possessed perfect knowledge of God," the youth replied, "I should never offend him; for only those who do not know Him, disobey Him." The Abbot was satisfied, and dismissed him with the words: "My son, you are firmly grounded in the faith and true science will pave the way to Heaven for you."

It was this true science of God, this science of the Saints, that Columban had come to Bangor to learn and to put into practice. There was no more fervent novice or monk in the "Valley of the Angels" than he. "He gave himself up entirely," says Jonas, "to fasting and prayer, to abnegation of self, and to the faithful carrying of the sweet yoke of Christ; for his only aim was to follow Christ by taking up His Cross and becoming like unto Him." He lived habitually in the sight of the world to come, as if he had already broken the ties of life, and were dead already. All his actions sprang from this frame of mind. Like St. Antony of Egypt, he never used

<sup>6</sup> Adamnan, *Vit. Columbae*, II, 39: "And this same Libran in those days fervently took the monastic vow." Gildas speaks of the "vow of the monk".

<sup>7</sup> Gildas, *De Excidio* (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, t. 69, col. 552).

<sup>8</sup> Bolland., *Act. SS. Aug.*, III, 57.

to take any account of the time gone by ; but, day by day, as if ever fresh beginning his exercise, he made still greater efforts to advance, repeating to himself continually the saying of the Apostle, " forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before."

Columban's learning and piety soon attracted universal attention, and when he had attained the canonical age,<sup>9</sup> Comgall not only permitted him to advance to the holy priesthood—a rare honor for a Celtic monk in those days<sup>10</sup>—but also gave him a share in the direction of his great school. Among his pupils was a young nobleman of the Sept of Hy-Cennsealach, Cellach or Caillech by name, who afterwards accompanied him to the Continent, where he shared his labors and trials for many years, and then laid the foundations of the celebrated Abbey of St. Gall and became the Apostle of the Alamannians.

Austere as was the life led by the monks of Bangor, it seemed all too sweet, too quiet and soothing to such an insatiable lover of penance and self-denial as Columban. The words of the Recluse were ever ringing in his ears: " The weakness of my sex alone keeps me from crossing the sea and looking out for a more advantageous field of battle." He often thought of his great namesake, Columba, the founder of Iona, who had embarked on the ocean and sailed on and on until he had reached a lonely islet in the North from which his eye could no longer scan the summits of his native hills. Every day it seemed clearer to him that Bangor was not to be his abiding-place. He felt called, like the great Patriarch of old, to go forth from his kindred, and out of his father's house, and to live as a stranger in the land which God would show him. He would become a hermit, a preacher of penance, a founder of monasteries, a missionary to the heathen—whatever it might be God's will to make of him.

Comgall was at first strongly opposed to his plans. He was loath to lose such a talented and exemplary monk. Perhaps he had entertained the secret hope that the younger man would be the support of his declining years and one day succeed him in the government of his beloved monastery. But he may have

<sup>9</sup> Thirty years.

<sup>10</sup> Of the many thousands of ancient Celtic monks only a small number were priests. Cf. *Irische Kanonensammlung*, XI, 3.

resisted merely to test his disciple's vocation. He himself had passed through a similar crisis in his youth. Seized with the national passion for pilgrimage, he had dreamed of spending his days in the service of God in a foreign land. Then his true vocation had been revealed to him, and he had become a prophet among his own people. He thought it might be the same with Columban. But when he saw that nothing could turn him from his purpose, he withdrew his opposition, fearing, no doubt, that, by resisting any longer, he might be sacrificing the higher interests of God and of souls to his own personal convenience.

But Comgall did more than give his sanction to Columban's enterprise—he entered heart and soul into the preparations necessary to insure its success. He selected twelve of the most God-fearing of the Brethren—among them Gall, Luan, Deicola, Potentian, and Columba, who was of the same family and tribe as Columban—to be his companions, and ordered public prayers to be said for a prosperous voyage.

When the day set for their departure arrived, the little band, followed by the blessing of the Abbot and the good wishes of all the Brethren, marched down to the sea-shore, where a vessel bound for the Continent was ready to receive them. Their appearance was certainly calculated to excite wonder and attention wherever they went. They wore a coarse outer garment, in color as it came from the fleece, and under this a white tunic of finer stuff. They were tonsured from ear to ear across the front of the head, while the long hair behind flowed down on the back: and the eye-lids were painted or stained black. Each had a long cambutta, or curved-headed staff: and slung from the shoulder a leathern water-bottle, a wallet for food, and a satchel which contained his greatest treasure—a book or two and some relics.<sup>11</sup>

Before embarking, all knelt down on the strand and in fervent prayer recommended themselves to the merciful guidance of Heaven. As the boat swept out to sea, the pilgrims watched with tear-dimmed eyes the receding shores of their beloved Erin, and wondered whether they would ever walk her green hills and valleys again.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Montalembert, *Monks of the West*. German Edit., II, p. 449 note; and Joyce, l. c., p. 148.



How swiftly we travel! there is a grey eye  
 Looks back upon Erin, but it no more  
 Shall see, while the stars shall endure in the sky,  
 Her women, her men, or her stainless shore.

Melodious her clerics, melodious her birds,  
 Her children are gentle, her seniors wise,  
 Her men are illustrious, truthful in words,  
 Her women have virtues for love to prize.

From the plank of the oak where in sorrow I lie  
 I am straining my sight through the water and wind,  
 And large is the tear from the soft grey eye  
 Looking back on the land that it leaves behind.<sup>12</sup>

After an uneventful voyage of three days or thereabouts, the ship reached the coast of Armorica or Brittany.<sup>13</sup> But Armorica was Celtic ground, a part, as it were, of his native land, and it was to strangers that Columban had vowed to devote his life. Accordingly, after a short stay, during which his party was increased by a number of sturdy Bretons, he crossed the Vilaine and set foot on Gallic soil—it was the year 589, and Columban was about forty-eight years old. Here he debated the question, whether he should settle down in the Frankish dominion, or pass on to other nations. The decision he made dependent on the reception he would meet with among the Franks and Gallo-Romans.

St. Comgall died in the year 601, but his spirit lived on for many generations in the institution which he had founded, and still speaks to us in the famous Antiphony in which his admiring disciples sang his virtues and learning. Situated so near to the sea, Bangor was exposed to the attacks of every invader. In 823 it was plundered by the Danes, who broke open the reliquary of St. Comgall and wounded the bishop of the monastery. Some years later it was completely destroyed by a band of freebooters. In 1121 St. Malachy set to work to

<sup>12</sup> Verses attributed to St. Columba of Iona. Translat. by Dr. D. Hyde.

<sup>13</sup> "Ad Brittanicos perveniunt sinus," says Jonas, l. c., I, 4. If we compare this with c. 21: "ut Ligeris scafa reciperetur Brittanicoque sinu redderetur," there appears to be no doubt whatever that Columban landed in Brittany, not in Great Britain. When Jonas wrote, Armorica was called Britannia. Cf. Fredegar, *Chron.*, IV, 11, 12, 78.

restore this "lost paradise", as his friend St. Bernard of Clairvaux styled it; but the divine praises had not been sung there many years, when a lawless chieftain, Niall O'Loughlin, turned it into a heap of ruins once more. In 1469 Pope Paul II transferred the property of the monastery to the Franciscans. During the Reformation, Bangor shared the fate of the other great nurseries of saints and scholars. Its lands were handed over to the Earls of Kildare.

The churchyard only remains to mark the site of the ancient monastery. Better and more enduring monuments of its former greatness than mouldering arch or tottering wall are the life-stories, written indelibly on the pages of history, of its two greatest sons, St. Columban and St. Gall.

The actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.



**PART II.**  
**IN THE KINGDOM OF THE FRANKS.**



## I.

### GAUL IN THE SIXTH CENTURY: LIGHTS AND SHADOWS.

“**C**ONSTANT wars and the consequent negligence of the priests and the bishops had caused religion to decay throughout the dominions of the Merovingian kings. The Christian faith indeed remained, but men hardly anywhere cared to practise self-mortification and penance.” Such is the brief description which Jonas gives of the state of Gaul at the arrival of Columban and his companions. Is this appreciation just? Or is it exaggerated? Had religion really decayed so sadly that hardly more than the mere profession of the faith remained? In order to give a satisfactory answer to these questions we must take a rapid survey of the history of the Frankish conquest, and the changes, political, religious and social, which it effected.

The Franks were probably the successors of the Sicambrian League which opposed itself to Julius Caesar when he made his famous dash across the Rhine. They included the Chattans (or Chatti), from whose dialect the name was drawn, and whose homes lay outside the middle section of the *Limes Germanicus*. We hear of the Franks for the first time about the middle of the third century, when vast numbers of them slipped through the Roman lines below Mainz and, with the Vandals in their wake, overran a large part of Gaul, plundered many cities of Spain, and even made their way across the sea into Africa. Aurelian inflicted bloody punishment on the next band that attempted to invade Gaul, and restored for a time the ancient frontier of the empire from the mouths of the Rhine to the mouths of the Danube. Probus returned to the policy inaugurated by Caesar and recolonized the depopulated lands on the Gallic side of the Rhine with his Frank captives. Under the following emperors the incursions of the Franks were renewed, their marauding expeditions taking the

shape of conquests. Untold numbers of bold adventurers lost their lives in these enterprises, for in their wars with the barbarians the Romans displayed even greater cruelty than the barbarians themselves: while the Franks spared the lives of their Roman prisoners, the Romans put their Frankish captives to the sword, or tossed them in thousands to the wild beasts in the arena. But neither defeat nor massacre could stem the mighty torrent of invasion. When Julian's victories brought it to a standstill on the Middle Rhine, the scene of conflict shifted to the Lower Rhine. No Roman historian or panegyrist speaks of the loss of Batavia: it was the Greek Zosimus who told the world that "the whole Batavian island [Holland] had fallen into the hands of the Salian Franks".<sup>1</sup> Then came the turn of Toxandria (Zeeland) and Brabant.

Encouraged by these successes, the Franks pushed their conquests up the Rhine. In 355 they took Cologne; it was retaken by the Romans, only to come into the permanent possession of the Ripuarian Franks some decades later. In the beginning of the fifth century the northernmost limits of the Roman empire were Andernach on the Rhine, Tongres, Amiens and Arras. In 409 Amiens and Arras were given up, and a little later Cambrai fell. Aëtius made heroic efforts to save the remnants of Roman Gaul, but his brilliant victories merely delayed the final catastrophe. In 475 Treves was taken by storm after a gallant defence, and the capital of Gaul, the northern Rome, became a Frankish town. Ten years later, Clovis, the youthful leader of the Salian Franks, swept away the last vestige of Roman dominion north of the Alps by his victory over the Syagrius at Soissons.

Thus after two hundred years of almost uninterrupted fighting, the land which Julius Caesar had subjugated in less than seven years and which had been the pearl of the Roman provinces for the greater part of four centuries, passed into the possession of the Teutonic nations: the Visigoths ruled from Bordeaux to the neighborhood of Tours, Orléans, Clermont and Arles; the Burgundians were settled between Aquitaine and the Alps; the Alamannians occupied the territory between the Lech and the Moselle; the Franks claimed the north and

<sup>1</sup> Zosimus, III, 6.

northwest, i. e. the Lower Rhine from Coblenz to the sea, Holland and Belgium, and all of France north of the Loire, with the exception of Armorica, which had secured its independence and formed a kind of rendezvous of Celtic refugees from various parts of Gaul and from Britain. Clovis recognized the strength of the Armorican cities, and rather conciliated than attempted to conquer them.

Such was the political situation of Gaul in the last quarter of the fifth century. Henceforth the map of the country changed almost from year to year. "The Alamannians and the Visigoths had but the shortest lease of their conquests, the Burgundians were crushed and humiliated, even the realm of Clovis was parcelled out again almost as soon as it had been pieced together, and the independent Celts, Gallo-Celts, and Gallo-Britons were constrained to accept a sovereign. But, after all the changes, it was the Franks who endured, who grew constantly stronger, who built up a law and an empire."<sup>2</sup>

Of all the barbarians who battled with the Caesars for the empire of the world none were so thoroughly hated by the Romans as the Franks. Their perfidy had become a by-word, and their cruelty was equalled only by that of the Romans themselves. But in spite of the inveterate hatred which they inspired, these dauntless, unconquerable warriors claimed no small share of interest and admiration. Their strange appearance, their flashing eyes, their long yellowish hair which fell in plaits to the waist, their muscular limbs emphasized by their close-fitting garments, were a feast for the eyes of the effeminate Italian and Gallo-Roman. And the Roman legionary spoke with admiration of the dexterity with which the Frank warrior hurled his double-edged battle-axe, swung his oval shield, and brandished his iron-tipped lance. With a courage worthy of the best days of Greece and Rome, the Frank preferred to die rather than to yield an inch of ground to his foe.

The Franks being the aptest pupils of the Romans in learning the royal game of war, their masters were not averse to taking them into their service. Not a few of these mercenaries rose to the highest civil and military offices. We hear of Frank tribunes, generals, and consuls, and one or other of

<sup>2</sup> Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 104.



them even stretched out his hand to seize the imperial diadem. But though they served Christian emperors and were trained in more or less Christian surroundings, the Frankish nobles remained, with few exceptions, worshippers of their heathen gods. Charietto, who fell fighting for Rome against the Alamannians; Merobaudes, who shared the consular dignity with Gratian (377), and Arbogast, who was for a time the most powerful man in Gaul, made no secret of their paganism. We know that Childeric, the father of Clovis, who fought with the Romans against the Arian Visigoths and the pagan Saxons, did not show the slightest inclination to accept the religion of his allies. And if the nobles and adventurers, who left their country and their tribe to seek their fortunes amongst the Romans, clung so tenaciously to their ancestral superstitions, the common people and their leaders who remained at home must have been still less influenced by the religion of their deadliest enemies.

It was not until the Franks exercised dominion over large tracts of Gallic territory and ceased to drive out or dispossess the Gallo-Roman population that their attitude towards Christianity underwent a gradual change. In Batavia and Toxandria, where Christianity had just begun to take root when the Franks poured across the Rhine, no Christian church or community survived; a similar fate was reserved for the districts about Tournai, Cambrai and Arras. The valleys of the Somme, the Middle Meuse, the Moselle and the Lower Rhine fared better: the bishoprics of Soissons, Amiens, Noyon, Tongres, Toul, Treves and Cologne weathered the storm, and, though reduced in power and influence and population, soon became active centres of Christian civilization. At Treves, Arbogast, a grandson of the famous rival of Theodosius, openly professed Christianity and sought the friendship of such cultured churchmen as Sidonius Apollinaris of Clermont and Auspicius of Toul. Although we do not hear of many who then and there followed the examples of Arbogast, still the daily intercourse with Christians and the consequent familiarity with a superior civilization, the fact, too, that whole tribes of their countrymen, the conquerors of Italy and Spain, of Southern Gaul and Africa, had embraced Christianity,—all this was calculated to shake the faith of the Franks in their

pagan gods and traditions, and made their conversion only a question of time. When a man of Clovis's influence, talents and energy set them the example of "burning what they had worshipped, and of worshipping what they had burned", they bade farewell in thousands, without a pang of regret, to Thor and Wodan, to Balder and Frigga, and became the most faithful, though in many respects also the most forward, sons of Holy Church.

With the baptism of Clovis<sup>8</sup> and his three thousand warriors on the memorable Christmas morning of 496, Catholic Christianity became the established religion of the kingdom of the Merovingians; still nearly a hundred years elapsed before all the Franks were converted. Paganism lived on especially in those districts from which the former Celtic or Roman inhabitants had been expelled by the conquerors, that is, on the Middle and Lower Rhine, in Holland and Belgium. Laws were enacted for the suppression of pagan worship; the civil and ecclesiastical authorities were encouraged to destroy the images of the gods, to set fire to the heathen fanes, and to punish the participants in idolatrous feasts and dances; but as no one was compelled to receive baptism, Christians and pagans continued to live side by side for many decades of years. It is true the Church steadily gained ground, but her adherents were frequently such only in name, and disgraced their Christianity by practices altogether at variance with its spirit.

Before examining the state of religion and morality under the Merovingians, it will be necessary to say a word on the relations of the Church and the State.

Long before the conversion of Clovis the Gallic Church occupied a prominent place socially and intellectually in the Christian commonwealth. She had remained comparatively free from heresy; she had given both Greek and Latin Fathers to the Church, and her schools rivalled those of the East.

<sup>8</sup> Nicetius, Bishop of Treves, in the earliest account we possess of his conversion, ascribes Clovis's change of religion to the efforts of Clotilda and to his own honest search after the truth (*M. G. Ep.*, III, p. 122). Avitus of Vienne, in a letter to Clovis, speaks of efforts that had been made to win over the Frankish King to Arianism (*Aviti Ep.*, 46). Theoderic the Great, whose wife Autofleda was a sister of Clovis, may have made this attempt or at least inspired it.

When the empire grew feeble and the land was visited by foreign invaders and harrassed by intestine wars,<sup>4</sup> the bishops became in all but the name the rulers of the cities. It was from the bishops that all who had grievances against the civil authorities, against brutal abuse of power, against heartless tax-collectors and still more heartless usurers, sought redress; and the bishops were ever ready to hear, to advise and to protect. It was the bishops who secured from Valentinian the appointment of the *defensores*, or advocates of the citizens. The Church with her hierarchy was the only organization in the midst of the general disorganization. It was not ambition of power and worldly glory that prompted the bishops to take upon themselves duties that were really foreign to their sacred office, such as the building of bridges, the regulation of streams, the construction of aqueducts, or the enforcing of sanitary measures in times of epidemic sickness. They did all this, and much more besides, because it had to be done, and the State left it undone. Thus the bishops had a twofold claim on the gratitude and attachment of the people, who venerated in them not only the dispensers of the mysteries of God, the mediators between this world and the next, but also looked up to them as their natural leaders and protectors.

These bonds of union between the Church and the people were strengthened still more when Gaul passed into the hands of the German invaders. The Church was the only institution that outlived the ruin of the Roman world; her representatives were the sole heirs of the ancient civilization. The nations needed the Church as the only source of the inestimable blessings of religion, order and culture; but the Church was also glad to avail herself of the secular power in the struggle with brute barbarian force; and thus relations of intimacy sprang up between the Church and the State which increased as time went on and were productive of the most far-reaching consequences for all succeeding ages.

Although many temporal advantages accrued to the Church from this alliance, she was also hampered by it in various

<sup>4</sup> Especially the sporadic popular insurrections caused by "constant famine and frequent pestilence, the cruel enactment of excessive taxes, military and judicial oppressions" under the later Roman emperors. (Cf. Salvian, *De Vero Iudicio*. B. V. Salvian wrote in the reign of Honorius, early in the 5th cent.)

ways. The Church, which had possessed comparatively little property in Roman times, was munificently endowed by the Merovingian royalty and nobility. The members of the hierarchy—there were 112 bishops in the Frankish realm in the seventh century—ranked higher in the social scale than the highest officials of the crown; their judgment was appealed to in all important affairs of state; they acted as arbitrators in quarrels between rival sovereigns, and were entrusted with the most delicate diplomatic missions. They exercised a legal supervision over the administration of justice, and were thus able to mitigate many of the rigors of the law. While a bishop could sit in judgment on a noble of the realm, no bishop could be judged except by a council composed of his fellow-bishops. The censures pronounced by the Church were recognized and even enforced by the civil power.

But these blessings, as we said, had their drawbacks. All ranks of the clergy had to swear allegiance to their sovereign, and the prelates who were invested with crown lands became dependents of the rulers and were bound to political service. Taxes were levied on the property of the Church, and the patrons or protectors of benefices claimed the right of nominating or presenting to them. Ecclesiastics, though not bound to personal military service, were obliged to arm their servants and place them at the disposal of their lieges in times of war or sedition. The potentates insisted that no one should enter the ranks of the clergy without their permission, and only too often they presented, or rather dictated, candidates for ordination who lacked every qualification for the sublime office of the priesthood.

Especially detrimental to the welfare of both Church and State was the constant interference of the kings in the episcopal elections. In spite of the remonstrances of individual bishops and the decrees of synods, the Merovingian autocrats bestowed the most lucrative benefices on their favorites and sold the episcopal sees to the highest bidders. The civil power also made its influence felt in ecclesiastical legislation. Without the consent of the king no synod was allowed to meet, and the decrees passed by the assembled bishops were subject to his approval.

Of course the Church fared better under some rulers than under others. Clovis respected the laws of the Church in regard to the election of bishops, but he did not scruple to bring pressure to bear on the ordinaries to ordain men of his choice to the priesthood. His eldest son, Theoderic I of Metz (511-534), is accused of having introduced the pest of simony into the Frankish dominions. Childebert I of Paris (511-558), on the other hand, energetically assisted the bishops to maintain ecclesiastical discipline; whilst Chlothar I (511-561), the fiercest and most grasping of the sons of Clovis, who survived his brothers and united all their possessions under his sceptre, tried to rule the Church with as high a hand as he ruled the State; during his reign there was no question of carrying out the decrees of the Councils of Orléans (538) and Paris (557) in regard to simony and the consecration of laymen.

After Chlothar's death the kingdom was divided amongst his four sons by lot. Charibert (561-567) received Paris and Brittany, Gunthram (561-592) Orléans and Burgundy, Chilperic (561-584) Neustria, and Sigibert (561-575) Austrasia. Of all the Merovingian kings none was perhaps so well-disposed towards the Church as Gunthram.<sup>5</sup> He is said to have taken a solemn oath to promote no layman to an episcopal see, and he boasted that it was not his manner to traffic in benefices. Sigibert, too, kept his hands free from simony. In 575 he was assassinated by the hirelings of Fredegunde, and was succeeded by his little son Childebert II. Then began the fierce struggle for supremacy between Sigibert's widow, Brunhilde, and the Austrasian aristocracy, in which ecclesiastics were engaged on both sides. Simony at once became the rule, and Gregory of Tours says that in those days a cleric was but seldom advanced to a bishopric.<sup>6</sup>

During his brief reign Charibert appears to have walked faithfully in the footsteps of his father, Chlothar. Chilperic of Soissons was a man of many parts—he had a fair knowledge of Latin Grammar, introduced three new letters into the alphabet, wrote bad verses, and dabbled in theology—but an out-and-out egotist, devoid of all sense of justice. He named all the bishops himself, and as a rule his choice fell on lay-

<sup>5</sup> For Gunthram and his services to the Church see Fredegar, *Chron.*, IV, 7.

<sup>6</sup> H. Fr., VI, 7, 38. Greg. Magn. ad Virgilium Arel.

men.<sup>7</sup> He ordered all the Jews of his realm to be baptized, permitted the marriage of nuns, and attempted to change the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. Chilperic was murdered at Chelles near Paris in 584. Gunthram assumed the reins of government for his infant son, Chlothar II, and for a time at least the Church enjoyed immunity from royal encroachment.

It is clear that an age in which barbarian fierceness and Roman corruption met and reacted on each other must fall far short of the ideal of morality. Only too many of the Franks had laid aside their heathen religion but kept their heathen morals. They had not been tried and refined in the fire of persecution. No great religious movement had preceded their adoption of Christianity. They had no martyrs or confessors to look up to and to emulate, and the society into which they entered, far from offering them incentives to virtuous living was rather calculated to confirm them in their inherited vices. It was this peculiar character of the conversion of the Franks and the degraded state of the nation with which they came in contact that made the work of their spiritual and moral regeneration so difficult. Religion and morality do not take root and grow and bear fruit in a nation in a day: they are the result of patient, persevering labor carried on from generation to generation. Unless we bear this in mind we cannot understand the history of Europe during the early Middle Ages.

The crimes of the Merovingian kings have been detailed so often that we need but touch lightly on this sad chapter of Medieval history. Nearly every page of Gregory of Tours furnishes us with examples of unscrupulous abuse of power, of treachery, breaches of natural ties, filial ingratitude, conjugal infidelity, polygamy, sacrilege, murder. The tragic gloom grows more intense as we pass from Clovis to his sons and grandsons, and reaches its direst stage in the long and bloody conflict between Fredegunde and Brunhilde, the fit heroines of the most sanguinary of the Teutonic legends.<sup>8</sup>

In 566 Sigibert of Austrasia married Brunhilde, the beautiful daughter of the king of the Spanish Visigoths. His brother Chilperic of Soissons, whom Gregory calls the Herod

<sup>7</sup> Greg. Tur., VI, 46.

<sup>8</sup> The Nibelungen Saga.

and Nero of his time, repudiated his wife, Audovera, and married Brunhilde's sister, Galswinda, though already on intimate terms with Audovera's seductive and intriguing maid, Fredegunde. Within a year Fredegunde compassed the death of her rival and became Chilperic's queen. The murder of Galswinda was the signal for the frightful civil wars that devastated the Frankish dominions for the next fifty years. Brunhilde urged Sigibert to make war on Chilperic and to avenge the death of her sister. Chilperic was defeated, his eldest son, Theodebert, slain, and his expulsion from his kingdom imminent, when Fredegunde came to his rescue by persuading two young men, whom she had armed with poisoned daggers, to assassinate the victorious Sigibert at the very moment when he was raised on the shields of his soldiers and proclaimed king of Soissons. Brunhilde and her children were captured, but Merovig, the second son of Chilperic and Audovera, contrived their escape. In gratitude Brunhilde married him; but their union was of short duration: Merovig fell into the hands of his father, and, at the instigation of Fredegunde, was put to death. But Fredegunde's thirst for blood was not satiated: in 580 she secured the death of Audovera's third son, Clovis, of Audovera herself, and of certain other sons of Chilperic, who, though illegitimate, might still have been considered in the line of succession, and thus made a clear path to the throne for her own son Chlothar. To Chilperic himself she proved so unfaithful that, when he was assassinated, all men pointed to her as the murderess.

After the death of Merovig, Gunthram of Burgundy took Sigibert's son, Childebert, under his protection, adopted him as his son, and, being childless himself, nominated him as his successor: "One shield," he solemnly declared, "shall cover us, one lance defend us." But even "good king Gunthram", as his subjects called him, was not free from the vices of his house. He may not have been responsible for the death of his general Mummolus; but he put away his wife, Marcatrude, and married one of her attendants, Austrachilde. When his brothers-in-law upbraided him for his conduct towards their sister, he had them put to death, and when Austrachilde fell sick and died, he gave orders that her physicians should be executed because they had not been able to save her life.

It would be a mistake to judge the Franks as a whole by the vices of their kings. The people were, as is frequently the case, better than their rulers. Yet in this case also the old adage lost none of its wisdom: *qualis rex, talis grex*: the crimes of royalty were imitated on a smaller scale by all classes of society. High and low appeared to act on the principle that might was right, that whatever was feasible was also lawful. We read of murders committed in holy places and of private vengeance forestalling the action of justice. Drunkenness was a vice confined to no particular class, and the sacredness of the marriage bond was not merely disregarded by a Chilperic and a Charibert. The "auri sacra fames"—the accursed hunger after gold—was never keener, and no means were so despicable as not to be resorted to in order to satisfy it. Oaths were lightly taken and as lightly broken. Places of honor in city, Church and State were sought as the highest good, and life was not thought worth living without them.

And yet lights were not wanting to offset these dismal shadows. In threading our way through the gloomiest pages of the Merovingian story we are never overtaken by total darkness; we never doubt that "God's in His Heaven", and that the moral order of the world remains unshaken; we never experience a withdrawal of spiritual warmth and life-giving hope. By the side of Clovis we see St. Chlothilda; St. Rade-gundis shared the throne with Chlothar, and Ingoberga and Bertha<sup>9</sup> were the wife and daughter of Charibert.

Gregory of Tours emphasizes the vices of the Franks and Gallo-Romans; their virtues he deemed matters of course, which required no chronicler. Agathias, viewing the Franks from a distance, does not spare words of praise for them as a whole. He speaks well of their laws, their political institutions, their sincere attachment to the orthodox faith.<sup>10</sup>

The Franks were indeed proud of their new religion and ready at all times to draw the sword in its defence. This is attested by the Prologue to the Salic Law. Here Christ appears as the protector of the Franks, who loves them and gave them the victory over all their enemies, especially the Romans,

<sup>9</sup> Wife of Ethelbert of Kent.

<sup>10</sup> Agathias, *Hist.*, I, 2.



The Franks hated paganism and heresy. They adopted Christian customs with alacrity. The numerous inscriptions that have come down to us help us to gain a fair idea of their public and private life during the first century after the conquest of Gaul.<sup>11</sup> There are touching references to genuine Christian education in the bosom of the family, to heroic charity, to generous hospitality, to redemption of slaves, to sympathy in general with the deplorable condition of the bondman and the captive. We see the faithful on their knees with outstretched arms, or prostrate on their faces in fervent prayer, weeping and bewailing their sins; we see them crowding to funerals, chanting sacred hymns and psalms, and venerating the relics of the Cross of Christ; we read how their patron saints protect the churches, the cities, the cemeteries and the homes of the faithful; we hear of numerous miracles, of the dead raised to life, of the sick healed, of demons driven out; we listen to the holy office sung in the churches day by day; we enter beautiful basilicas built by holy men, and lavishly adorned with candles and paintings, with marbles and costly hangings. We read of pious night vigils, public penances, and severe disciplines to which the rich and nobles submit in satisfaction for their sins; of virgins who refuse the most enticing offers of marriage in order to consecrate their love and their lives to the service of their Heavenly Bridegroom; of men in the prime of life who leave their homes to become humble lay-brothers in a monastery; of long pilgrimages undertaken for the love of Christ. We are told of bishops who gave all they had to ransom their fellow citizens languishing in captivity, and of zealous, God-fearing priests who succored the poor and the afflicted and remembered the leper and the slave in their testaments.

The testimony of the inscriptions is confirmed by the *Lives* of holy men and women written by such men as Gregory of Tours, Venantius Fortunatus and Jonas of Bobbio. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Divine Office were well attended. When the bells rang, the people flocked to the churches on Sundays and feast days. Frequent and even daily Communion was practised in many places. All men were pene-

<sup>11</sup> See Le Blant's invaluable work: *Inscriptions chrét. de la Gaule*. 2 vols. Paris, 1855-65. (Cf. Kraus, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 282.)

trated with the consciousness of their own powerlessness before God. "Ha!" exclaimed the dying Chlothar, "how powerful must the Heavenly King be, who slays such mighty earthly monarchs!" The thoughts of death, of eternity, of God's retributive justice, though oftentimes drowned by passion, were familiar to all. Scepticism and unbelief were things unknown. Perhaps at no time was faith in God's providence and His interference in the affairs of men so lively and so universal. The supernatural was not regarded as something abstract, or imaginary, or far off, but as something intensely real—there was no insurmountable barrier raised between this world and the next.

We meet with the same vices among the clergy as amongst the laity: excessive love of earthly goods, immorality, violation of oaths, rebellion against the temporal and spiritual authorities. Yet as a class the clergy worked earnestly and successfully for the religious and moral betterment of the people. There were such preachers of note amongst the bishops as Remigius of Rheims, Nicetius of Treves, Caesarius of Arles, Desiderius of Vienne, Germanus of Paris, Praetextatus of Rouen, Venantius of Poitiers. Their sermons were simple, intelligible to the most illiterate, and delivered to edify not to dazzle. The liturgical ceremonies were carried out with dignity and, where the means permitted, with splendor. Sidonius Apollinaris complained that in his time the churches were allowed to fall to ruin and that no one thought of building new ones. In the sixth century new churches arose everywhere and the old ones were carefully renovated and adorned. Bishops and priests insisted on the observance of Sunday, and heavy fines were imposed by the State on those who disregarded the synodal decrees on this matter.

If there were cowards and hirelings in the ranks of the clergy, there were not wanting true shepherds according to Christ's own Heart, men who bore courageous witness to justice and truth and the moral laws; who feared neither banishment nor torture nor death itself in the cause of God; who were in the strict sense of the word the "conscience of the people". Abbot Avitus of Mesmin forbade Chlodomer to put the captive Burgundian king Sigismund to death; Germanus of Paris did all in his power to prevent the war between Sigibert

and Chilperic, and excommunicated Charibert and his concubine Marcovefa. Nicetius of Treves was a fearless champion of the poor and the oppressed. He refused the Sacraments to Theodebert I and Chlothar I, and preferred to go into exile rather than to truckle to these potentates.

Of the penitential discipline we shall have occasion to speak more at length elsewhere. It was considerably relaxed in regard to laymen, but even the sporadic attempts made to enforce it were beneficial. In the case of clerics the penitential canons were rigorously applied, and this circumstance contributed not a little to raise the general standard of clerical excellence. Unfortunately, both laymen and ecclesiastics often contented themselves with paying the *wehrgeld*<sup>12</sup> prescribed by the civil law, and refused to submit to the canonical penances laid down by the synods.

Under the Merovingian kings the foundations were laid for the Medieval system of dealing with the vexed problem of pauperism and beggary. The ancient practice of the Church of keeping lists of such persons as were entitled to receive alms regularly—the so-called *matricularii*—was continued. The First Council of Orléans (511) insisted that all who were unable to work should receive the necessary food and clothing. The Second Council of Tours (567) set up the principle that each community must take care of its own poor, who should not be allowed to wander about from place to place. Incurables and prisoners were also confided to the care of the communities, and special officers were appointed to look after them. Numerous *Xenodochia*<sup>13</sup> were erected—Atolus, a contemporary of St. Remigius, built as many as six—and pious foundations for their support are frequently mentioned. Gregory of Tours speaks of a Leper Asylum in Chalon on the Saône, and later on we hear of others in Verdun, Metz and Maas-tricht. The hospital of Colombier had a staff of physicians, and could accommodate twenty patients.<sup>14</sup> The fight with poverty was successful, too, for we read of impoverished communities that rapidly rose to comparative well-being. The

<sup>12</sup> Money paid in redemption of crime.

<sup>13</sup> Public buildings for the reception of pilgrims and for the relief of the poor and the infirm.

<sup>14</sup> Mabillon, *A. SS.*, II, p. 613.

prosperity of Verdun is ascribed to the untiring activity of Bishop Desideratus, and the valley of the Moselle owed its lucrative fruit and wine trade to Nicetius of Treves.<sup>15</sup>

Of the greatest importance for the welfare of the nation was the fact that the condition of the serfs was much improved. Under the Franks the lot of the serf was by no means so degraded as that of the Roman slaves. "The Germans," says the English historian of the Franks,<sup>16</sup> "did not employ their slaves in menial duties to minister to their personal ease; each slave had a dwelling and a home of his own; he tilled the land and paid dues to his master, but the rest of his time and labor was his own. He supported his wife and family, lived much in common with freemen, and was able in a large measure to preserve his self-respect." With the advent of the Franks in Gaul the abominable Roman slave system was swept away, but the laws affecting slaves borrowed harshness from the Roman codes. The Church never failed to interpose in behalf of the slaves. "The clergy preached, the bishops remonstrated and insisted, the annual Councils formulated their demands—which, appealing to Divine authority, were virtually decrees—in the interests of humanity. Churches, abbeys, and monasteries, stood ever open as asylums for the oppressed; and at one of the Councils held at Lyons, early in the sixth century, the bishops were enjoined to excommunicate any master who killed his slave without giving him the opportunity of defence." The liberation of slaves was pronounced a meritorious work, and the dying slaveholder was adjured, as he loved his soul, to emancipate his brethren for whom Christ had died. The slave was not considered as disqualified for the priesthood, and the Fifth Council of Orléans even permitted the ordination of slaves without the consent of their masters.<sup>17</sup>

Neither the instruction of youth nor the cultivation of letters was wholly neglected in the sixth century. It is true the literary output was not very great, and very little indeed of what was written is remarkable for classic elegance or purity of

<sup>15</sup> *Ven. Fort. Carm.*, III, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 217.

<sup>17</sup> V Council of Orléans, Can. 6. On Slavery under the Merovingians see Gfroerer, *Geschichte deutscher Volksrechte im Mittelalter*, II, pp. 3-35.

style; but no one will deny that it was an unmixed benefit that the hollow pedantry of the rhetoricians of the later Roman times found but few imitators. A new style of writing arose which was admirably suited to the needs and the capacity of the age. The historians, poets, and hagiographers of the Merovingian period wrote to benefit their contemporaries, to advance the cause of religion and morality, to increase piety, not to make a vain show of learning. The later works of Venantius Fortunatus, which breathe the new spirit, were more intelligible to his countrymen, and therefore far more productive of good, than the earlier and more ambitious ones which halt in the wake of classic antiquity.

Thus, in the light of the facts which we have adduced and which could be multiplied indefinitely, we are forced to take a more favorable view of the state of Gaul in the sixth century than that expressed by the biographer of St. Columban. Religion had not decayed in the dominions of the Merovingian kings, but, in spite of constant wars, was everywhere showing signs of vitality and giving promise of abundant fruit; the faith not only remained, but was daily taking deeper root in the minds and hearts of the people. The disintegrating and destructive elements were successfully counteracted by the conservative and constructive agencies of Divine Faith, Hope, and Charity. The dark shadows, "shot through with orient beams", were gradually retreating before the onward march of light.

The Celtic pilgrim who had just landed on the coast of Gaul was destined by Providence to infuse new life and vigor into continental monasticism and to help to transform it into the most effective auxiliary of the Church in the grand work of civilizing and Christianizing the Teutonic nations.

## II.

### ITINERANT PREACHING. MONASTIC FOUNDATIONS IN BURGUNDY.

TO Columban, coming fresh from a land which was then the seat of a flourishing Church, abounding in the fruits of sanctity, learning, and zeal, the condition of Gaul must have appeared sad indeed. But far from discouraging him, the corruption of morals and the neglect of the saving remedy of penance aroused him to immediate and energetic action. The words of the Lord to Jeremias rang in his ears: "There is none that doth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done? They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to the battle. There is no grape on the vines, and there are no figs on the fig-tree, the leaf is fallen. Is there no balm in Galaad? or is there no physician there? Why then is not the wound of the daughter of my people closed?"<sup>1</sup> His course, for the present at least, was clear to him: he would be a physician to this people; he would pour the balm of God's word into their gaping wounds and heal them.

Pushing from place to place, Columban, like another John, everywhere preached the Gospel of penance for the remission of sin. The people were delighted with his preaching and flocked in crowds to hear him. But the living example of the virtuous and mortified lives of the strangers made even a deeper impression on the luxurious and pleasure-loving Gallo-Romans than the vehement eloquence of their leader. "So great was their humility," says Jonas, "that, while the children of the world strive to outdo one another in the race for dignities and honors, they, on the contrary, contended amongst themselves for the prize of lowliness, mindful of the inspired word: 'He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted',<sup>2</sup> and of the word of God to Isaïas: 'To whom shall I have respect, but

<sup>1</sup> Jerem. 8:6, 13, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 14:11.

to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?'<sup>3</sup> And their mutual charity was so perfect that they seemed to have but one will. All were alike adorned with modesty and temperance, meekness and gentleness; sloth and discord were held in abhorrence by them; pride and arrogance were visited with severe corporal punishment, and the poison of anger and envy was sedulously removed. So admirable indeed was their patience, their charity, and their meekness that it was impossible not to believe that the God of meekness Himself dwelt in their midst. If one of them committed a fault, all thought it their duty to correct him. They had all things in common, and if anyone attempted to appropriate anything for his own use, he was cut off from the company of the others and subjected to penitential discipline. No one dared to contradict another, or to say a harsh word to him. Thus they seemed to all men to lead the lives of angels on earth."<sup>4</sup> Truly there was no need in their case to admonish the people to follow their good doctrine, but not their bad example. It was because he realized in his own life, as far as frail man may, the sublime ideals of the Gospel that Columban's preaching everywhere found open ears and hearts. The rich and noble, we are told, invited him into their houses, and wherever he tarried for ever so short a time all hearts were drawn to the love and service of God.<sup>5</sup>

The news of the arrival of the Celtic missionaries and of their fruitful ministry of the word spread through the country and reached the ears of Gunthram of Burgundy. Anxious to see and hear the strangers whose praises were in the mouth of all, he invited them to his court in Orléans. Here they were graciously received, and the king was so impressed by their learning and sanctity that he begged Columban to remain in his kingdom, offering him whatsoever he would. Columban refused his gifts, saying that his sole object in life was to follow out to the best of his ability the precept of his Divine Master: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me".<sup>6</sup> "If you wish

<sup>3</sup> *Isaias* 66: 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Luke* 9: 23.

to take up the cross of Christ, and to follow Him," the king replied, "retire to some desert place within our dominions, and pray for our welfare and the welfare of our subjects." Columban agreed to this proposal, and fixed his abode on the southwestern slope of the Vosges Mountains, near the headwaters of the Meuse, the Moselle and the Saône, on the borders between Austrasia and Burgundy.<sup>7</sup>

Nearly a century and a half had elapsed since the Burgundians had put an end to the Roman domination in the valleys of the Rhone, the Saône and the Loire, but they had themselves long since ceased to be the masters of the soil to which they had given their name. The original homes of the Burgundi, of Burgundiones, were on the southern shore of the Baltic, their nearest neighbors being the Vandals and the Suevi. In the last quarter of the third century we find them fighting side by side with the Alamannians against the Roman legions in Western Germany. Conflicting interests, however, soon broke up this confederacy, and the Burgundians sought the friendship of the Romans. Valentinian I promised to support them in their quarrel with the Alamannians; but when they appeared on the Rhine ready to give battle, they found no Romans to help them, and wisely beat a hasty retreat. Still they by no means gave up their purpose of settling down west of the Rhine. Returning to the charge with greatly increased forces, they wedged themselves in between the Franks and the Alamannians, pushing the former to the north and the latter to the south. In 406 they joined the Vandals and Alans in their unsuccessful invasion of Italy, and in the following year in their attack on Gaul. The usurper Constantine checked their advance, but his victory was only a partial one, and the Burgundians remained in possession of a large tract of Gallic territory. In 411 king Gunticar (Gunther) supported the usurper Jovinus against the emperor Honorius, and invaded southern Gaul. Though defeated by Ataulf, the Goth, the ally of Honorius, he was nevertheless permitted by the latter to re-

<sup>7</sup> The date of Columban's arrival in Burgundy can be ascertained by combination of two passages in the *Vita*. According to I, 24, he was driven from Luxeuil three years before the conquest of Burgundy by Chlothar II, i. e. in 610; according to I, 20, this happened in the twentieth year after his arrival in the Vosges; hence the latter event falls in the year 591.



tain his lands on the Middle Rhine with Worms as his capital.

Not long after this the Burgundians on the left bank of the Rhine adopted the Christian religion, being the first German tribe to become Christians without the intervention of Arianism.<sup>8</sup> About the year 430 their tribesmen on the right bank of the Rhine, hard pressed by the Huns, turned to the God of the Christians for assistance, and after several thousands of their warriors had received baptism, they succeeded for a while in stopping the progress of the terrible Attila. Invading Belgium in 435, the Burgundians were defeated by Aëtius, with whom they entered into an offensive and defensive alliance. But already in the following year the perfidious Roman sent Attila's hordes against them. In a bloody battle, which forms the historical background of the Nibelungenlied, Gunticar's army was completely routed, and the remnant of the Burgundian nation under Gundioc, withdrew from the banks of the Rhine forever and founded a new kingdom in the fertile basin of the Upper Rhone (443). Gundioc was a Visigoth, and during his reign many Burgundians adopted the Arian heresy. After Gundioc's death, the kingdom was divided amongst his three sons, Gundobad, Chilperic and Godegisel—an arrangement which led, as usual, to bloody civil wars, treachery, and murder. Gundobad slew his brother Chilperic, the father of St. Clotilda, tied a stone round the neck of his wife and drowned her, and when Godegisel attempted to dethrone him with the help of the Franks, he hunted him down at Vienne, and put him to death (500). After having shown to the world that he could be more cruel and ruthless than any of his race, Gundobad thought it expedient to act the part of a wise and prudent ruler. He abjured the Arian heresy and established a milder code of laws, we are told, for the Burgundians, "so as to prevent their magistrates from dealing harshly with their Roman fellow-citizens". This is the Burgundian code known as the *Lex Gundobada*, which contributed not a little to bring about the rapid fusion of the two nationalities into one people.

Gundobad died in 516, and left his kingdom, which he had extended over the whole basin of the Rhone, to the Cevennes

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Hauck, *Kirchengesch. Deutschlands: Die Völkerwanderung*.

and the Mediterranean Sea, to his son Sigismund. It is doubtful, in spite of what Gregory of Tours writes, whether Clotilda counselled her oldest son's attack on the Burgundians. Chlodomer was probably actuated by the hereditary Frankish thirst for conquest and spoil, when he picked a quarrel with Sigismund, invaded Burgundy in 523, and again in 524, and carried the king and his family to Orléans, and there slew them.<sup>9</sup> Towards the end of the war, however, Chlodomer lost his own life, and it was not until 532 that his brothers completed the conquest of Burgundy. Godomar, the brother of Sigismund, fought bravely, but in vain, for his kingdom, and lost his life in the struggle. The Middle kingdom fell to the heirs of Clotilda; first to Chlothar, and after his death to Gunthram. Through all the vicissitudes of the Merovingians, it retained its ancient name and its ancient territorial limits, and its inhabitants continued to be judged according to the laws established by Gundobad.

But to return from this digression which we thought all the more pardonable because the extreme northeastern corner of the kingdom whose fortunes we have sketched was to be the first and most important stage of our hero's eventful pilgrimage on the Continent. Ascending the Breuchin, a tributary of the Lanterne, Columban came upon the ruins of an ancient fort to which the tradition of the day gave the name of Anagrates, the present hamlet of Annegray, in the Commune of Faucogney.<sup>10</sup> The country for many miles around was wild and uncultivated, and far richer in steep hills and rugged crags than in arable land; but was it not on this very account suited for their purpose? Where could they find a spot more retired, a solitude more profound? And as for facing the prospect of hard, unsavory fare, and perhaps of downright hunger, must not a true soldier of Christ be ready to endure far more than this? And surely they had not left their native land to seek comfort and luxury beyond the sea!

Amid the singing of Psalms the monks planted the sacred sign of our redemption on the Roman ruin, and then set to work to construct their wattle-work huts with twigs and sap-

<sup>9</sup> Sergeant, *The Franks*, p. 168.

<sup>10</sup> Dept. Haute-Saône.

lings, which the forest supplied in abundance, bestowing special care on the one that was to serve as their oratory. Their life was one of great privation. Sometimes they had nothing to eat save wild herbs, roots and the barks of trees, seasoned, as Jonas remarks, by virtue and trust in God. Sickness, too, invaded their ranks, and in order to obtain relief for their stricken brother, all the rest abstained for three days from every kind of food, passing the time in meditation and prayer. On the third day a peasant of the neighborhood, warned, as he said, by an interior voice, brought them a supply of bread and vegetables. He would take no other remuneration except the promise of the monks to pray for the recovery of his sick wife. We can imagine the fervor with which Columban and his little band set about the payment of this debt of gratitude, and when the peasant reached his humble dwelling, he had the happiness of finding his wife completely restored to health.

When the monks again found themselves in great want, providential assistance came to them from another quarter. About three of four leagues from Annegray was the little abbey of Salix or Saulx; its abbot, Carantoc, himself a Celt of Brittany, hearing of the distress of the strangers, sent his cellarer Marculf with an abundant supply of wheat, peas, beans and lentils. Marculf lost his way in the dense forest, but the horses when left to themselves took the right road and stopped of their own accord at the gate of the monastery. On his return the good cellarer spoke so much of Columban's holiness that many disciples joined him and the sick and afflicted resorted to him from all sides. Men and women of all classes and nationalities came—Celts from Carantoc's monastery, Gallo-Romans from Besançon, Burgundians, Franks from Neustria and Austrasia, and Alamannians from Alsace.

The reader may be tempted to ask how the Irish monks contrived to make themselves understood by the Teutonic inhabitants of the neighborhood, or the Teutonic candidates who presented themselves for admission into their ranks. In the first place, there were not wanting, especially among the higher classes, men who had acquired a sufficient knowledge of Latin to act as interpreters, and one or other of these would no doubt gladly place his services at the disposal of the strangers. In the absence of interpreters, they had the Latin-

German glossaries to fall back upon. An eighth century work of this kind, still extant, contains such words and phrases as the following: "Elpe—adjuva (help); werest—ubi est (where is he?); guaz guildo—quid vis (what do you want?); gueristin erro—ubi est senior tuus (where has your master gone?); guane cumes gebrothro—unde venis frater (where do you come from, brother?); ecum es min erre us—de domo senioris mei (I come from my master's house); gueliche lande cumenger—de qua patria (from what land do you come?); e guasmer in gene Francia—in Francia fui (I was in the land of the Franks); guar in gesinat ze mesina—vidisti eum ad matutinas (did you see him at Mass or Matins?); ne guez—nescio (I do not know)."

More interesting still than this ancient glossary is a Latin-German vocabulary preserved in a parchment manuscript of the library of St. Gallen, in Switzerland. Tradition assigns its authorship to St. Gall himself; at all events, it is the work of a Celtic monk of the seventh century, for besides being written in Irish script, the Easter Controversy, which was finally settled in the beginning of the eighth century, is referred to as still going on. It contains a very complete list of words relating to building, agriculture, navigation, travelling, the human body, the seasons, the weather, the ordinary astronomical phenomena, and the flora and fauna of the country. In another dictionary, probably of the same date, the words are grouped under the following heads: trees, timber, iron utensils, vegetables, farming, animals, the human body, articles of dress, church vestments, sacred vessels, and other liturgical articles.<sup>11</sup>

Although Latin was the official language of all Medieval monastic institutions, the study of the vernacular was at no time wholly neglected. Columban himself, it seems, never acquired a sufficient knowledge of Merovingian German to be of any practical use to him for preaching; Gall, on the other hand, was perfectly versed both in the Frankish and the Alamannian dialect.

When the number of the monks became so great that they could not all live together in the ruins at Annegray, Colum-

<sup>11</sup> Greith, *Gesch. der altirischen Kirche*, 276-78.

ban determined to build a larger monastery in the neighborhood. For this purpose Childebert II, who had succeeded his uncle Gunthram on the throne of Burgundy in the spring of 592, granted him the site of the once famous baths of Luxovium, or Luxeuil, as it was afterwards called, about eight miles west of Annegray.<sup>12</sup> The ruins of the old Roman town lay on a slight eminence gently rising out of the valley of the Breuchin. The whole district had long lain deserted, and was thickly covered with pine forests and brushwood. The fragments of columns and bas-reliefs scattered about among the debris of the walls and temples, and the mutilated images of pagan gods still standing in the depths of the surrounding forests, bore silent but eloquent witness, on the one hand, to the civilization and religion of Roman Gaul, and on the other to the destructive tide of barbarian invasion that had swept away both the one and the other. For generations the only visitors to the baths had been marauding bands of Suevi from the valleys of the Vosges and the savage denizens of the wilderness.

Luxeuil was a better site for a monastery than Annegray. The soil when brought into cultivation promised a more generous return for the labor of the monks. It enjoyed a solitude as profound as that of Annegray, for the great forest descended far into the plain, without being so far removed from the habitations of men, and the mineral waters of the springs would prove an inestimable blessing to the sick and feeble.

Leaving a certain number of the monks at Annegray, Columban built a monastery for the rest here—not a magnificent edifice with majestic towers and fretted roofs and arched and vaulted cloisters, but, just as at Annegray, a cluster of plain huts, sufficiently large to accommodate one or more monks, two larger buildings to serve as refectory and guest-house, an ample school-room, a stable and a barn, the whole surrounded by a hedge or a rampart of palisades or stones. Within the enclosure, but easy of access from without, arose

<sup>12</sup> Acc. to the *Vita Sadalbergae*, 2, (Mabillon, *A. SS.*, II, p. 405) Luxeuil was founded under Childebert II. As Gunthram died 29 March, 592, and Childebert died in the autumn of 595, the date of the foundation can be approximately fixed at 594.

the simple but spacious church dedicated to the Prince of the Apostles.

The sons of the Frankish nobility entered the new monastery in such great numbers that it, too, soon became full to overflowing. Columban accordingly founded a third colony about five miles to the north of Luxeuil, which he called Fontanae, from the numerous springs and rivulets with which the country was watered.

- \* Following the custom of the Scots, Columban kept the headship of these monasteries himself, appointing over each community a provost (or local superior) of approved virtue and prudence. Although he spent most of his time at Luxeuil, he paid frequent visits to Annegray and Fontaine in order to keep in personal touch with all his spiritual children, to encourage them by his words, and to edify them by his example. It was for these communities that he drew up his famous Rule, which was destined to play such an important part in the monastic history of the seventh century.

### III.

#### THE RULE OF ST. COLUMBAN.

OF the many Rules written at different times and in different places by the fathers of Oriental monasticism, those of the younger Macarius, of Pachomius, and of Basil early found their way into Gaul through the translations of St. Jerome, of Rufinus of Aquileia, and of Cassian, and were modified by the founders of Gallic monasteries to suit local conditions. Thus there were almost as many monastic Rules in Gaul in the sixth century as there were heads of religious houses. The general principles of the monastic life were, of course, the same everywhere, but each abbot applied them with greater or less severity according to his individual character and early training. As no monk was strictly bound to remain in the monastery in which he had been professed, there was an almost endless going to and fro from monastery to monastery, not so much in search of new rules as of new abbots. Even Lérins, that great nursery of asceticism and learning in the fifth and sixth centuries, did not exact stability from its monks, and as it possessed no written Rule, men flocked to it from all parts of Gaul and Italy to acquaint themselves with its institutions and to imbibe its spirit. Cæsarius of Arles was the first to attempt to put an end to these abuses by demanding from his monks not only absolute poverty but also perseverance in the monastery until death. His Rule, however, was adopted by but comparatively few monasteries, and even in these it was not observed to the letter.

It was reserved for Columban to do in Gaul what Benedict had done in Italy—to found an association of monks with a definite monastic constitution. Monasticism was, as it were, born again; but it did not grow and thrive and come to healthful maturity until the Benedictine and Columbanian Rules joined hands across the Alps.

The Rule of St. Columban consists of two parts, which are quite different from each other in scope and character: the first part, or what might be called the moral code, lays down the general principles on which the monastic life is based; the second part, or penal code, prescribes the penalties for various offences against the rule. The oldest documents bear witness to the fact that the two treatises originally formed parts of one and the same rule, though all the manuscripts, with one exception, have handed them down separately and under different titles. The first is called: *Regula Monachorum S. Columbani Abbatis*; the second: *S. Columbani Abbatis Regula Coenobialis, seu de Quotidianis Poenitentiis Monachorum*; or also: *Regula Coenobialis Fratrum de Hibernia*.

#### I. THE REGULA MONACHORUM.

The authenticity of the *Regula Monachorum* has never been seriously called in question; it is, in fact, incontestable. No other of Columban's writings has been preserved to us in so many ancient manuscripts, and no other has been reprinted so often in modern times. St. Benedict of Aniane, the first reformer of the Benedictine order (about A. D. 800), quotes it repeatedly in his *Concordia Regularum*<sup>1</sup> as the work of the founder of Luxeuil, and the oldest and most trustworthy manuscripts, such as those of Bobbio, St. Gall, Ochsenhausen, and Augsburg, reproduce it under the title "*Regula S. Columbani Abbatis*".

The Bobbio manuscripts divide the Rule into ten chapters, the tenth being a quotation from the Epistle of St. Jerome to Rusticus, which was probably added to the original rule by Columban himself toward the end of his life. A Cologne manuscript of the fourteenth century omits the tenth chapter altogether, its place being taken by the *Regula Coenobialis*. The seventh chapter, which treats of the Divine Office, is not found in the Alamannian group of manuscripts. This is not to be wondered at, because, though quite Columbanian in spirit, it is evident that it is out of place where it now stands, wedged in as it is between the chapters on Chastity and Discretion. That it did not form part of the original Rule is further evidenced by the fact that it begins with the words:

<sup>1</sup> Edit. Hugo Menard, Paris, 1638 (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, t. 103).



"De synaxi<sup>2</sup> ergo"—"Concerning the divine office therefore", and concludes with "Amen", which is not the case with any of the other chapters. Besides, it is the only chapter that does not contain merely general prescriptions but very precise and detailed regulations. The author's repeated appeals to the traditions of the Irish Fathers to justify the order of the daily psalmody adopted by him impart to the whole chapter an apologetic character and give color to the surmise that it was added by Columban about the time that the Burgundian bishops took him to account for various practices at variance with those obtaining in the Frankish dominions. Copies of the Rule must have been in circulation before this addition was made, for only in this way can its omission from the Alamannian manuscripts be satisfactorily explained.<sup>3</sup>

In writing his Rule Columban had no intention of adding anything to the traditional views on the duties of monks; thoughts such as those expressed by him are met with in the writings of the Fathers and in all the monastic rules both before and after his time. We have already seen that the tenth chapter is a quotation from St. Jerome; the chapters on Obedience and Discretion contain passages taken verbatim from Cassian and St. Basil. And yet Columban's Rule is quite different from that of St. Basil or of St. Pachomius, of St. Benedict or of St. Cæsarius. The demands he makes on his monks are by no means new; new, however, is the energy with which these demands are carried to their highest pitch. It is this energy that stamps his rule with the mark of his personality and distinguishes it from every other; it is this energy also that accounts in no small measure for the rapid and widespread adoption of a monastic discipline whose unexampled severity was calculated rather to repel than to attract.

The following free translation of the Monastic Rule<sup>4</sup> is here presented to the reader in the hope that, in spite of its mani-

<sup>2</sup> The word Synaxis (σύναξις) was used by the Greek Fathers not only for the Holy Sacrifice and Holy Communion but also for the choir service. See Cassian, *Instit.*, II, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Seebass, *Über Columba v. Luxeuil's Klosterregel u. Bussbuch*, pp. 11 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Columban's Rule was first printed in 1604 in Goldast's *Vetera Paraenetica*, Pars I, pp. 166 ff. Twenty years later it was included in the *Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum*, edited by Thomas Messingham, director of the Irish Seminary in Paris; and again in Patrick Fleming's *Collectanea Sacra*, Louvain, 1667. The latest and best edition is that of Otto Seebass, *Zeitschrift f. Kirchengeschichte*, 1895, pp. 366 ff.

fold shortcomings, it will enable him to gain a better idea of Columban's monastic ideal than any dissertation, no matter how learned or lengthy, could give him.

#### THE MONASTIC RULE OF ST. COLUMBANUS, ABBOT.

Above all things we must love God with our whole heart and with our whole mind and our neighbor as ourselves; <sup>5</sup> all our works must be informed with this love.

1. *Concerning Obedience.* At the first word of a superior all must rise to obey, because by obeying him they obey God, according to the word of the Lord Jesus: "He that heareth you, heareth me".<sup>6</sup> If, therefore, any one hearing a word of command does not rise straightway he shall be adjudged disobedient. Whoever contradicts incurs the crime of contumacy; he is not only guilty of disobedience but by opening the gateway of refractoriness to others he becomes the seducer of many. If anyone obeys with grumbling, his obedience, not coming from the heart, is disobedience: therefore, until he shows his good will, his work is of no avail.<sup>7</sup>

To what limits should obedience be carried? Obedience unto death is certainly enjoined on us, because Christ was obedient to His Father for us unto death.<sup>8</sup> "Let this mind be in you," says the Apostle, "which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient (to His Father) unto death, even to the death of the cross."<sup>9</sup> The true disciple of Christ must obey in all things; no matter how hard or distasteful the task laid upon him may be, he must set about its fulfillment with zeal and joy, because only such obedience is acceptable to the Lord, who says: "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me".<sup>10</sup> Wherefore also He says of the disciple worthy of Him: "Where I am, there also shall My minister be with Me".<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Matth. 22:37.

<sup>6</sup> Luke 10:16.

<sup>7</sup> See Rufinus's translation of the Rule of St. Basil. *Pat. Lat.*, t. 103, p. 487. Greek text, *Pat. Graec.*, t. 31, pp. 1162-3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Phil. 2:5-8.

<sup>10</sup> Luke 14:27; Matt. 10:38.

<sup>11</sup> John 7:34; 12:26. Columban is fond of combining parts of different texts in one quotation.

2. *Concerning Silence.* The Rule of silence must be diligently observed, for it is written: "The service of justice shall be quietness and peace".<sup>12</sup> All superfluity of words must be avoided; except in cases of necessity or utility, the monk must be silent, because, according to the Scripture, "in the multitude of words there shall not want sin".<sup>13</sup> Hence our Saviour says: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned".<sup>14</sup> Justly indeed shall they be condemned who would not, though able, speak just words, but preferred in their garrulousness to speak wicked, unjust, ungodly, vain, injurious, double-meaning, false, quarrelsome, abusive, shameful, absurd, blasphemous, harsh, and crooked words. These and such like words must never pass the lips of the monk, whose tongue must ever be governed by prudence and right reason, lest by his talkativeness he be betrayed into detractions and contradictions born of pride.

3. *Concerning Food and Drink.* The food of the monks shall be coarse, consisting of cabbage, vegetables, flour mixed with water, and a biscuit, and taken toward evening.<sup>15</sup> Surfeiting must be guarded against in eating, and drunkenness in drinking, so that what is partaken may sustain, not injure, the body, for by overloading the stomach the mind becomes stupid. Those who look out for the eternal reward should satisfy only their real needs in this life. True discretion requires that food and work shall be duly proportioned. It is reasonable to promote spiritual progress by bringing the flesh into subjection by abstinence, but if abstinence is practised to excess, it ceases to be a virtue and becomes a vice. Hence the monk must fast daily, but also daily refresh his body with food; since he must indulge his body, he must do so sparingly and by means of the coarsest food; for only to this end does he eat daily that he may be able to make daily progress in virtue, pray daily, work daily, and read daily.

4. *Of Practising Poverty, and of Treading under Foot all Covetousness.* Monks to whom for Christ's sake the world is crucified and who are crucified to the world,<sup>16</sup> must sedulously guard against

<sup>12</sup> Eccclus. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Prov. 10:19.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 12:37.

<sup>15</sup> The monks of St. Martin of Tours also took their modest meal toward evening. From the *Reg. Coenobialis* we know that the ordinary beverage of the monks was beer. The ancient Irish monks lived most frugally. "Cum sedent ad mensam adferantur herbae sive radices aqua lotae in mundis scutellis; item pomacervisia et ex alveario mellis ad latitudinem pollicis, id est aliquot favi." (Colgan, *Acta Sancti Hib.*, I, 328, note 7, ex regula S. Ailbei.)

<sup>16</sup> Gal. 6:14.

covetousness, seeing that it is wrong for them not only to be possessed of superfluities, but even to desire them. It is not what they possess that matters, but rather how their wills are affected by their possessions. Those who have left all things to follow Christ the Lord with the cross of daily fear have treasure in heaven. Therefore, as they are to possess much in heaven, they ought to be content with little, nay, with the barest necessities on earth, remembering that in monks covetousness is a leprosy, as it was in Giezi, of the sons of the prophets; and the cause of treason and perdition, as it was in the disciple of Christ, and of death, as it was in Ananias and Sapphira, the half-hearted followers of the Apostles. Utter nakedness, therefore, and contempt of earthly goods is the first perfection of the monk; the second is the cleansing of the heart from every vice; the third, perfect and unbroken love of God and of divine things, which is the fruit of renouncement of all things of earth. Few indeed are the things that are really necessary to us to sustain life, or rather, according to the words of the Lord, but one thing, food. We need, however, to have our senses purified by the grace of God to understand spiritually the words of our Lord to Martha.

5. *Of Spurning Vanity.* The danger of vanity is shown by the few words addressed by our Saviour to His disciples, whose joy that spirits were subject to them was mingled with thoughts of vanity: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven";<sup>17</sup> and to the Jews who justified themselves before men He says: "That which is high to men, is an abomination to God".<sup>18</sup> From these words and the well-known instance of the Pharisee whose works, though good in themselves, were not acceptable in the sight of God because he vaingloriously boasted of them (whereas the sins of the Publican, humbly confessed, were forgiven), we may gather that vanity and self-exaltation are the ruin of every good work. Therefore let no boastful word ever proceed out of the mouth of the monk, lest even his greatest work be rendered useless thereby.

6. *Concerning Chastity.* The chastity of the monk is judged by his thoughts. To him as well as to the disciples who heard them spoken these words of the Lord are addressed: "Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart".<sup>19</sup> Let him anxiously watch, lest He to whom he is consecrated, looking on him, find in his heart that which is abominable; lest, according to the words of St. Peter, he have eyes full of lust and adultery.<sup>20</sup> What does it profit him to be chaste in body if he is not chaste in mind? For God is a spirit and makes

<sup>17</sup> Luke 10: 18.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 5: 28.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 16: 15.

<sup>20</sup> II Pet. 2: 14.

our spirit His dwelling-place, if He find it undefiled, free from adulterous thoughts and all stain of sin.

7. *Concerning Discretion.*<sup>21</sup> How necessary discretion is to the monk is shown by the errors of many and the ruin of not a few who, beginning their course without discretion, and persisting in it without this guiding knowledge, failed to bring it to a praiseworthy end. For, just as those who journey away from the path must necessarily go astray, so also will those who live without discretion of necessity fall into excess, which is opposed to virtue, for virtue is the mean between two extremes. On the right and the left of the path of discretion the enemy places divers stumbling-blocks and snares. We must therefore pray to God to grant us the light of true discretion to lighten the pathway of our life, surrounded as it is on all sides by the dense darkness of the world.

Discretion comes from the word *discernere*, which means to separate, to distinguish; it is the faculty by which we distinguish what is good from what is bad, what is mediocre from what is perfect. Just as light and darkness, so also were good and evil divided from the beginning, after evil had entered into the world through the devil, God having enlightened men to distinguish between them. Thus Abel, the God-fearing, chose good; Cain, the godless, evil. All the things that God made were good, but the devil, with deceitful cunning, oversowed evil among the good. What things, then, are good? Those which have remained whole and uncorrupted as they were created, which God, according to the Apostle, "hath prepared that we should walk in them, the good works in which we are created in Christ Jesus",<sup>22</sup> which are, goodness, integrity, piety, justice, truth, mercy, charity, salutary peace, spiritual joy, with the fruit of the Spirit: all these with their fruits are good. The things that are contrary to these are evil, which are, malice, impiety, injustice, lying, avarice, hatred, discord, bitterness, with the manifold fruits born of them. For the fruits of both good and evil are innumerable. . . .

We who have the assistance of God must at all times hold fast to what is good. In prosperity as well as in adversity we must implore the divine help that we may not be puffed up with pride when it goes well with us, nor be cast down with despair when it goes ill with us. True discretion is the inseparable companion of Christian humility and opens the way to perfection to the true soldier of Christ. . . .<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For this chapter cf. Cassian, *Conf.*, II, 1-5.

<sup>22</sup> Eph. 2: 10.

<sup>23</sup> St. Benedict, *Reg.*, c. 64, calls discretion "the mother of the virtues." Bede says of St. Aidan: "He was found to be endued preëminently with the grace of discretion, which is the mother of virtues." H. E., III, 5.

If we weigh all our actions in the just balance of true discretion, we shall never be betrayed into error; if we walk by the divine light of true discretion, we "shall not go aside neither to the right hand, nor to the left",<sup>24</sup> but keep ever on the straight way, chanting with the conquering Psalmist the words: "O my God, enlighten my darkness, for by Thee I shall be delivered from temptation".<sup>25</sup> For "the life of man upon earth is a temptation".<sup>26</sup>

8. *Concerning the Mortification of the Will.* Mortification is the most important part of the monastic rule. "Do nothing without counsel," says the Holy Scripture.<sup>27</sup> Wherefore, if nothing is to be done without counsel, everything must be done with counsel. Hence Moses commanded: "Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee, the elders and they will tell thee".<sup>28</sup> Though this may appear hard to the hard of heart, viz., that a man be always dependent on the will of another, it is nevertheless sweet to those that fear God, if it be practised to the letter and not in part only; for nothing is sweeter, nothing gives greater peace and security to the mind than a peaceful conscience, and nothing is better calculated to procure this peace of conscience than the renunciation of one's own judgment. "There is greater danger in judging," some one has said, "than in being judged."<sup>29</sup> The monk who always seeks counsel and acts on it, will never go wrong; for even though the counsel he receives be wrong, his faith and obedience will be right and will be rewarded. But if a person, whose duty it is to ask counsel, acts on his own impulse, he errs by the very fact that he presumes to judge for himself when he should have allowed others to judge for him; and even if what he does be good, it will profit him little, seeing that he swerved from the right course while doing it: he whose sole duty it is to obey, never dares to judge for himself.

If this be so, the monk must fly all pride of liberty, and learn to obey with true humility, without hesitation, without murmuring, for only then will the yoke of Christ be sweet and His burden light. Until he has learned the humility of Christ, he cannot taste the sweetness of the yoke of Christ nor the lightness of His burden. For the soul, harrassed with sin and toil, finds repose only in humility. Humility is its sole refreshment amidst so many evils. The

<sup>24</sup> Deut. 5:32.

<sup>25</sup> Ps. 17:29-30.

<sup>26</sup> Job 7:1.

<sup>27</sup> Eccles. 32:24.

<sup>28</sup> Deut. 32:7.

<sup>29</sup> "Majus enim periculum judicantis quam ejus qui judicatur." Sixtus, Sent., 174. Sixtus, a Pythagorean philosopher of the second century, wrote Aphorisms, which Rufinus of Aquileia translated and published under the name of St. Sixtus, Pope and Martyr. They are condemned in the Decree of Pope Gelasius. St. Augustine pointed out Rufinus's mistake in ascribing them to Pope Sixtus (Lib. II, Retract. 42.)

more it withdraws itself from the vanity and uncertainty without, the more rest and refreshment will it find within. What before seemed bitter, and hard, and painful, will now be light, and smooth, and pleasant. Mortification is indeed intolerable to the proud and hard of heart, but a consolation to him who loves only what is meek and lowly. No one, however, it must be remembered, can attain to the full possession of the felicity of this martyrdom unless all his desires, all his aspirations be directed toward it, to the exclusion of every other aim whatsoever.

The mortification of the monk is threefold: he must never think what he pleases, never speak what he pleases, never go where he pleases. No matter how distasteful the command imposed on him may be, he shall always say to his superior: "Not as I will, but as thou wilt",<sup>30</sup> after the example of our Saviour, who says elsewhere: "I came down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me".<sup>31</sup>

9. *Concerning the Perfection of the Monk.* The monk shall live in a monastery under the rule of one father and in the company of many brethren, in order that he may learn humility from one, patience from another. One will teach him silence, another meekness. He shall not do what pleases him; he shall eat what is set before him, clothe himself with what is given him, do the work assigned to him, be subject to a superior whom he does not like. He shall go to bed so tired that he may fall asleep while going, and rise before he has had sufficient rest. If he suffers ill-usage, he shall be silent; he shall fear the head of the monastery as a master and love him as a father, being ever convinced that what he commands is profitable to him; nor shall he criticize the words of the elders because it is his duty to obey and to do what he is bidden, as Moses says: "Attend, and hear, O Israel".<sup>32</sup>

Columban's Rule, as the reader will have remarked, is no monastic constitution in the strict sense of the word, but rather a treatise on the monastic life, a vade-mecum for monks, a mirror of perfection. With such a rule alone no monastery could have been governed even by a man of Columban's marvelous energy. It does not contain a word about the election of the abbot or the other persons in authority in a monastery; nor about the relations of the abbot to the individual monks

<sup>30</sup> Matt. 26: 39.

<sup>31</sup> John 6: 38. Cf. Rule of St. Francis of Assisi, 10; "The brothers shall remember that, before God, they have discarded their own wills."

<sup>32</sup> Deut. 27: 9.

and to the communities subject to him. Prescriptions in regard to the daily occupations of the monks are entirely wanting. Neither the time for rising nor the time for retiring to rest is fixed. The direction quoted from St. Jerome, that the monk should go to bed so tired that he may fall asleep while going, and rise before he has had sufficient rest, aside from the fact that it was not contained in the original draft of the Rule, could not have been followed out to the letter. The time for the only daily meal is rather vaguely specified as "vespertinus", in the afternoon. The monks are told that they must work and pray and read daily, but there is not the remotest allusion to the amount of time to be devoted to each of these duties. Only in regard to the order of the Divine Office did Columban think it expedient to put down in writing definite and detailed regulations, which, as we have seen, were afterward incorporated in the Rule itself.

He has been induced, he says,<sup>33</sup> to commit to writing certain points to be observed in regard to the daily psalmody, because the practice in this matter is by no means uniform.<sup>34</sup> Some divide the night into four vigils, viz., nightfall, midnight, cock-crow, and early morning, at which twelve psalms are recited or chanted throughout the year. For the long nights of winter this office seems too short to Columban, and for the short nights of summer he thinks the "frequent expeditions" from the cells to the church too burdensome and exhausting. Besides, he is of opinion that the length of the nocturnal office should vary not only according to the length of the nights, but also according to their sacredness; for with the Irish Fathers he makes a distinction between the ordinary nights and the "holy and most reverent vigils of Saturday and Sunday."

Columban prescribes three night offices, which were chanted in common in the church. At nightfall and at midnight twelve psalms<sup>35</sup> were the rule for the whole year, but for Matins the

<sup>33</sup> Reg. Monach. (ed. Seebass), chap. 7.

<sup>34</sup> For the different practices obtaining in the fourth and fifth centuries in the East and West, see Cassian, *Instit.*, II, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>35</sup> From the *Vita S. Brendani* we learn that in Ireland in his time (sixth century) 12 Psalms were sung at Vespers—Ps. 112, 103 and ten gradual psalms beginning with Ps. 119. (*Acta SS. Hib.*, p. 133.) The practice of singing 12 psalms at nightfall (and at midnight) is of Egyptian origin.



cursus was regulated as follows: on ordinary or ferial nights from 25 March until 25 September twenty-four psalms were chanted, sixteen by all the monks in unison, eight as antiphons,<sup>36</sup> that is, by two choirs alternately. From 25 September the quantity gradually increased until, on 1 November, thirty-six was reached, which number was kept up throughout the winter months. From 1 February, when the nights begin to grow shorter, the number of psalms gradually decreased until the summer cursus was reached at the time of the vernal equinox.<sup>37</sup> At the Saturday and Sunday Matins thirty-six psalms were sung from 1 May until 25 July; with the summer solstice the cursus was gradually lengthened, at first by selecting longer hymns and psalms, then, beginning with 1 August, by adding three psalms each week until, on 1 November, the maximum of seventy-five was reached, which was the winter cursus. With 1 February the cursus was shortened by three psalms a week until the summer cursus was reached on the first of May.

The day office was the same all the year round. Several times during the day, between the hours of work—how often or at what hours, we are not told—the monks assembled in the church and recited or chanted three psalms. These were interspersed with special prayers<sup>38</sup> offered up “for their own sins, for the whole Christian people, for the priests and the other consecrated servants of God, for their benefactors, for the peace of kings, and, lastly, for their enemies, that God may not lay it to their charge as a sin that they persecute and calumniate them, for they know not what they do.”

These prayers, or versicles, as Columban calls them, are identical in scope with the third series of Collects in the fam-

<sup>36</sup> Ἀντιφωνεῖν = ex adverso, reciproce et alternatim canere. Antiphonal singing is of Oriental origin and can be traced back to St. Ignatius of Antioch. (Baeumer, *Geschichte des Breviers*, p. 122.) The Irish ascribed its introduction to St. Mark. At the time of St. Jerome and Cassian the verses of the Psalms were not sung or recited alternately by the monks, but each one, when his turn came, recited or chanted a whole Psalm, while the rest listened. Cf. Jerome's *Letter to Rusticus*, c. 15: “Sing your Psalm when it is your turn.” See Cassian, *Conf.*, VI, 5. In Ep. 207, St. Basil describes the manner of singing the Psalms followed in his monastery.

<sup>37</sup> 25 March according to the Celtic computation.

<sup>38</sup> “Cum versiculorum augmento intervenientium, pro peccatis. . .” These prayers are called *Capitella* or *Capitula de Psalmis* in the Rules of Cæsarius and Aurelian, and by the Council of Agde (506). In the Rule of St. Benedict (c. 9) they are called “supplicatio litaniae.”

ous Antiphonary of Bangor,<sup>39</sup> a copy of which (in its earlier form, of course) had been brought to Gaul by Columban. From the same source we learn that a lesson from the Scriptures was read at the Sunday Matins, and that hymns were sung at the midnight and Matin service on the feasts of the holy martyrs and on all Saturdays and Sundays of the year. One of the most beautiful hymns in the whole Antiphonary is the following,<sup>40</sup> which, as the opening line implies, was chanted at the midnight office:

## 1.

Mediae noctis tempus est;  
Prophetica vox admonet;  
Dicamus laudes Deo  
Patri semper et Filio,

## 2.

Sancto quoque Spiritui,  
Perfecta enim Trinitas  
Uniusque substantiae  
Laudanda nobis semper est.

## 3.

Terrorem tempus hoc habet,  
Quocum vastator angelus  
Aegypto mortem intulit,  
Delevit primogenita.

## 4.

Haec justis hora salus est,  
Et quos idem tunc angelus  
Ausus punire non erat,  
Signum formidans sanguinis.

## 5.

Aegyptus flebat fortiter  
Tantum diro funere,  
Solus gaudebat Israhel  
Agni protectus sanguine.

<sup>39</sup> Antiphonarium Bench., Fol. 20 et 21; "Pro baptizatis, pro fraternitate, . . . pro pace populorum et regum . . . pro impiis, pro benefactoribus, pro eleemosynam facientibus. . . ."

<sup>40</sup> Some attribute this hymn to St. Ambrose. Cf. Baeumer, *Gesch. des Bre-viers*, p. 167.

## 6.

Nos vero Israhel sumus,  
Laetamur in te, Domine,  
Hostem spernentes et malum  
Christi defensi sanguine.

We read of Fathers of the Desert who were accustomed to recite the entire psalter every day, but no monastic rule of which we have knowledge prescribes a psalmody even remotely as long as that of Columban. St. Benedict, following the practice of the Egyptian monks, appointed twelve psalms for each night, and commanded that "under all circumstances the entire psalter, to the number of 150 psalms, be said every week"; the Rule of St. Columban exceeds this measure by far, for during the winter months 330 psalms were chanted each week at Matins alone and 252 at the other canonical hours—an average of more than 83 for each day.

It was not on his own initiative that Columban prescribed such a vast number of psalms for the Divine Office, for he tells us expressly that in this matter he was following the tradition of his countrymen. "Far from becoming weary of singing so many psalms, the Celtic monks", he says, "experienced the greatest sweetness in this exercise." We know that the primitive Irish saints were passionately fond of music and singing. When the songs of the bards had been consecrated and transfigured by the true faith, they became so beautiful, says an ancient writer, that the Angels leaned over the battlements of heaven to listen to them. "In the early ages of the Church many of the ecclesiastics took great delight in playing on the harp; and for this purpose commonly brought a small harp with them when on the mission, which beguiled many a weary hour in the intervals of hard work."<sup>41</sup> In the seventh and eighth centuries Irish teachers of music were as much in request on the Continent as those of literature and philosophy, and it was under the direction of the monk Maengal or Marcellus, an Irishman, that the music school of St. Gall attained its highest fame.

The Antiphonary of Bangor, also, bears striking testimony to the great esteem in which sacred music and song were held

<sup>41</sup> P. W. Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, p. 251 (2d ed.).

in the ancient Irish Church; for in all the hymns to the Fathers of the Faith mention is made of their having promoted sacred chant: "Patrick," we are told, "sang hymns and psalms to God"; "Comgall offered sacrifice to the Most High God with hymns and canticles", and "Cronan sang hymns to Christ".

But the ancient Irish saints were passionately fond of the Holy Scriptures, too, especially of the Psalms, no doubt because they were intended to be sung. Do we not read of Ossian, the son of Finn, that he complained to St. Patrick because his psalms and sacred hymns had silenced the harps of the bards? St. Columban himself studied the Psalms assiduously in his youth and at the School of Sinell in Cluain-Inis wrote as we have seen a commentary on them which was still extant in the tenth century.. If we bear all this in mind, we can readily understand why Columban devoted so much space in his Rule to psalmody and wished his monks to look upon it as one of their chief occupations.

Lest however the monks might think that long prayers alone were pleasing to God, he reminds them that they will be heard, not for much singing and long standing, but for purity of heart and intention. Nor should they be content with the prayers in common: their every movement should be a prayer, for "we are commanded by the Author of our salvation to watch and pray at all times", and St. Paul tells us: "Pray without ceasing".

## 2. THE REGULA COENOBIALIS.<sup>42</sup>

In the *Regula Monachorum* Columban tells his monks what virtues they must practise in order to attain perfection, insisting not so much on the reasons why they should be cultivated as on the degree in which they must be aimed at—obedience unto death, absolute poverty, daily fasting, chastity in thought as well as in action, complete mortification of the will and the judgment, prayer without ceasing. But, as Professor Hauck says, Columban was not content with the energy of command:

<sup>42</sup> Seebass, the editor of the *Regula Monachorum*, has also edited the *Regula Coenobialis* in *Zeitschr. f. Kirchengeschichte*, XVII, 218-234. He divides it into 15 chapters, combining the two recensions—a shorter and a longer one—and distinguishing the older from the younger by bolder type. The first nine chapters are genuine; the rest show numerous interpolations. (Cf. Krusch, *Vit. Col.*, Introd., p. 25.)

in the second part of his Rule he displays an energy of punishment never equaled, much less surpassed, by any monastic legislator.<sup>43</sup> The high ascetical ideal which he had traced for his followers was not to remain a dead letter, but was to be realized at all hazards.

Although the *Regula Coenobialis* is not found in all the older manuscripts under Columban's name, the evidence in favor of its authenticity is nothing short of conclusive. Even a cursory glance at the contents of the *Regula Monachorum* will make it clear to anyone that this cannot have been the famous Rule of Columban which was so widely observed and which raised up such a violent storm of opposition. A monastic Rule without sanctions to enforce its prescriptions is simply unthinkable. Now the Rule of St. Columban which was known to his biographer, Jonas of Bobbio, *did* contain disciplinary as well as ethical and ascetical directions. Speaking of the manner of life of Columban and his companions, he says: "The vice of discord was held in abhorrence by them, and pride and arrogance were visited with severe corporal punishment. . . . No one dared to contradict another or to speak a harsh word to him. . . . They had all things in common, and if anyone attempted to appropriate anything for his own use, he was cut off from the company of the others and subjected to penitential discipline."<sup>44</sup> Corresponding regulations are contained in the first and fifth chapters of the *Regula Coenobialis*.

After Columban's death, Agrestius, a former monk of Luxeuil, began a vehement agitation against his Rule.<sup>45</sup> Summoned before a synod of Gallic bishops and called upon to specify his charges, he said that the monks of Luxeuil were obliged to make the sign of the cross over the spoon with which they ate, and to kneel for a blessing when going out or coming in. Turning to the *Regula Coenobialis*, we read in Chapter 1: "Whosoever shall not make the sign of the cross over the spoon with which he eats, shall be punished with six strokes of the lash"; and in Chapter 3: "Whosoever shall not kneel

<sup>43</sup> *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, I, p. 271.

<sup>44</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 9.

for a blessing when leaving the monastery or returning to it, shall be chastised with twelve strokes of the lash."

In his life of Attala, Jonas tells us that immediately after Columban's death many of the monks of Bobbio left the monastery because, as they said, "they could no longer bear the weight of the rigorous discipline prescribed by the Rule", and it required all the zeal and energy and tact of Attala to prevent the disruption of the entire community.<sup>46</sup> Surely these monks could not have acted as they did unless some other Rule besides the *Regula Monachorum* of Columban had been in force in Bobbio.

About twenty-five years after the death of Columban, Donatus, a pupil of Luxeuil and since 624 bishop of his native town of Besançon, compiled a monastic rule for a monastery of women founded by his mother Flavia on one of her estates. In the preface he expressly states that this Rule is based on the Rules of St. Benedict, St. Cæsarius, and St. Columban. The chapters on the Divine Office and on Silence are taken verbatim from the *Regula Monachorum*, and a large number of disciplinary regulations from the *Regula Coenobialis* of Columban.<sup>47</sup> Hence there can be no doubt that Donatus, when he wrote his Rule between the years 640 and 650, had before him a written copy not only of the Monastic Rule but also of the Cenobitical Rule of his master, and that he looked on both as integral parts of one and the same Rule.

Much more evidence, external and internal, could be adduced in favor of the Columbanian authorship of the *Regula Coenobialis*, but what has been said is amply sufficient, we believe, to settle the question.

But the two Rules, it will be urged, are so radically different from each other as to make unity of authorship impossible. It is indeed hard to believe that the man who wrote the chapter on Discretion in the one could have laid down penalties whose severity is out of all proportion to the offences in the other. It is perhaps still harder to conceive that the tender-hearted father of his children who, when forced into exile, wrote to his successor: "Give Waldelenus for me the kiss which, in

<sup>46</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 1.

<sup>47</sup> See the Rule of St. Donatus in Holstenius, *Codex Regularum*, VI, 377 ff. (also in Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, t. 103).

the hurry of departure, I could not give him myself", could ordain that these his beloved children should be punished with six, ten, twelve, or fifty stripes for coughing at the beginning of a psalm, or for forgetting to pray before setting about the fulfilment of some task assigned to them, or for excusing themselves when reprimanded. We must remember, however, that there were two sides to Columban's character. Like most of the Celtic saints he possessed a full share of tenderness of character, but like them, too, he was eager, wilful, dauntless and passionate. The severity of the Rule of Bangor, under which he had lived so many years, his own ascetical life and character and his hot indignation at the prevalent corruption of morals in the Frankish dominions, doubtless influenced him to put so keen an edge on his penitential regulations. He saw that self-mortification and penance, without which a reformation of morals was out of the question, were no longer practised by the mass of the clergy and the people. Not being himself clothed with any ecclesiastical jurisdiction, he could not enforce discipline outside his monastery: he could exhort, denounce, but not pronounce sentence or inflict punishment. So he determined to carry out his plans of reform where alone he could do so without let or hindrance—in the monasteries subject to his authority. From their sacred precincts preachers of penance would then go forth in all directions and by their word and still more by the example of their mortified lives gradually change the face of the land.

The penitential discipline to which Columban subjected his monks, the old ones as well as the young ones, the priests as well as the lay-brothers, the sons of the Frankish and Burgundian nobles as well as the sons of the tradesmen and the peasants, was anything but flattering to the animal man. Besides confessing their sins to a priest before assisting at Mass and receiving Holy Communion,<sup>48</sup> the monks were obliged to accuse themselves of their sins against the Rule to their superior or to one of the older brothers at least once a day,

<sup>48</sup> It is impossible to say with certainty how often Mass was celebrated in the Celtic monasteries. At Iona, in the time of St. Columba, Mass was sung on Sundays and feast days and when a benefactor of the monastery died. (Adamnan, *Vit. Col.*, II, 12, 23, 45.) In the Columbanian monasteries Mass was celebrated on Sundays and on the 30th day after the death of a member of the Community. (Jonas, *V. Col.*, II, 12, 16.)

either before the repast, or before retiring to rest, or at some other convenient time.<sup>49</sup> "We must accuse ourselves," says Columban, "not merely of our grievous sins but also of our lesser faults, because confession and penance save the soul from death, and the Scripture tells us: 'He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little'";<sup>50</sup> After confession the penitent was subjected to severe correction, which served the double purpose of making atonement for past infidelity and of preventing as far as possible a relapse into the same defects.

If he sinned against poverty by calling anything his own, he received six strokes of the lash; if through covetousness he appropriated anything for his own use, it was confiscated, and he was punished with two hundred stripes. If through carelessness he caused the loss of food or drink, he had to remain standing in the choir during the Night Office without moving hand or foot whilst the others chanted twelve psalms; and, if the quantity spoiled exceeded a measure, he was condemned to drink water instead of beer until the total loss was made up.

If the penitent was distracted during grace before dinner, or did not answer Amen; if he talked without necessity, cut the table with his knife, or neglected to make the sign of the cross over his spoon before using it, he received six or even ten stripes.

If he visited others in their cells without permission, or entered the kitchen after dinner, that is, after three o'clock in the afternoon, or went outside the enclosure of the monastery, the penalty consisted of a prolongation of the ordinary fasts, called a *superpositio* (superimpositio). If he did not ask a blessing from the superior or from one of the senior monks before leaving the monastery or on returning to it, or did not make a profound inclination to the cross erected at the entrance, he was punished with twelve stripes. The same penance was prescribed for omitting to pray before beginning or after finishing any task.

Coughing at the beginning of a psalm, or singing badly, or smiling when another made a mistake, or omitting to make

<sup>49</sup> St. Basil recommends examination of conscience and public accusation every evening. "Ἐν τι γέγονε παρὰ τὸ δέον . . . τῷ κοινῷ ἐξαγγελλέτω. *Sermo asceticus*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ecclus.* 19: 1.



the prescribed inclination at the end of each psalm, was visited with six stripes; laughing, unless for some excusable reason, was punished with an extra period of silence or fasting.

Whoever touched the Chalice—all the monks except the novices received Communion under both species—was punished for his irreverence with six strokes of the lash. The same punishment was inflicted on the priest who celebrated Mass with uncut nails, and on the deacon who officiated with unshaved beard. Under the same penalty priest and deacon were cautioned not to allow their eyes to wander about during the Holy Sacrifice. Twelve stripes were inflicted on those who received the *eulogia*, or blessed bread, with unwashed hands, and a hundred on those who did not make the oblation before the time for beginning Mass was at hand. Whoever did not have the *Chrismal*, that is the little vase with the holy oils, or the pyx with the Holy Eucharist,<sup>51</sup> about him when doing some work at a distance from the monastery, was punished with twenty-five stripes; if he lost it in the field, but found it again immediately, the penalty was fifty stripes; if it remained in the forest all night, a long fast was imposed.

If the penitent told idle tales to another and did not immediately reprehend himself by saying: "I was in fault; I am sorry", but tried to excuse himself, he was condemned to a period of silence, or punished with fifty stripes. The same correction was administered to a junior brother if he said to a senior: "What you say is not true", and to anyone who reprimanded the brother porter in a loud voice for some neglect of duty. Whoever was guilty of a sin of pride and obstinacy was confined to his cell until he acknowledged his fault and humbly begged to be readmitted among the brothers. If anyone presumed to say to the Provost: "You shall not decide my case; I appeal to the Father Abbot or to the whole community", he was condemned to fast on bread and water for fifty days, unless he straightway fell on his knees and begged pardon for his fault, saying: "I repent of what I said."

<sup>51</sup> Some authors say that the *Chrismal* was a small, patin-shaped vessel in which the monks carried the consecrated species about with them on their journeys. Cf. *Poenitentiale Bedae-Egberti* (721-731), Chap. 39: "oportet eos, qui possunt fideles, monachos maxime, et scientiam habere baptizandi, et si longius alicubi exierint, Eucharistiam semper secum habere."

Whoever criticized the work of others, or told a pupil that he should learn his lesson or do the task assigned to him by his instructor with more diligence, was subjected to three periods of fasting or silence. Whoever spoke ill of others or failed to rebuke those who did so, was visited with the same punishment. Lying was punished with a two days' fast.<sup>52</sup>

Talking alone with a woman, or sleeping under the same roof with a person of the other sex, was punished with a hundred stripes or a fast of three days on bread and water. No penalties were laid down for actual sins of the flesh. Columban regarded them in the same light as Solon did parricide. When asked why he had not enacted punishments against those who take the lives of their parents, the Athenian legislator replied: "Because no one is capable of committing such a crime".

No matter how toilsome or sordid the work might be in which he was engaged, the penitent was not allowed to wash his head during the time that his penance lasted, except on Sundays, or when, for reasons of cleanliness, the superior thought it advisable to permit him to do so. The Provost could impose smaller penances at table; he was also empowered to remit one half of the penalty prescribed by the Rule for any offence. More than twenty-five strokes of the lash could not be given at one time.

Such is a brief summary of the penitential prescriptions of the *Regula Coenobialis*. They are characteristic of their author. In them Columban's utter contempt of all earthly things, his ardent thirst for self-renouncement, his indomitable energy, and his inexorable logic assume palpable shape, as it were. Every moment of the life of the true monk, "to whom the world is crucified; and who is crucified to the world," must be an act of worship of God. Obedience is the foundation on which the edifice of monastic perfection must be reared. There must be nothing unpremediated, nothing spontaneous in the daily actions of the aspirant to sanctity: nothing must be done without a previous command; every assertion of the individual will must be mercilessly suppressed. By curbing,

<sup>52</sup> In the Rule of St. Cæsarius of Arles lying is punished with 39 blows of the rod. The same Rule prescribes punishment on the spot for those who come late for the Divine Office: "*statim de ferula in manus accipat*" (c. 11).

breaking, annihilating his will, by subjecting it unhesitatingly to the will of his superiors, the monk will gradually obtain that perfect mastery over his passions which is the final object of all asceticism.

To attain this object Columban went beyond the bounds of prudence and discretion. He thought that virtue in its sublimest degree could be forced upon poor weak human nature, and that vices and imperfections of every kind could be ground to pieces.

If we compare the Rule of St. Columban with that of St. Benedict, we must concede the palm of superiority to the latter. The Benedictine Rule has, in the first place, the advantage of greater moderation. Corporal punishment is also prescribed, but sparingly, and to be applied only to the "unruly, the hard-hearted, the proud, and to boys and those under age". Benedict makes allowance for the weak and infirm, permitting them the use of meat and other indulgences; in Columban's Rule relaxation of any kind is not even hinted at.

But the Benedictine Rule is not only the work of a man of great prudence; its author was also possessed of an extraordinary talent for organization. Columban was one of those men who cannot bear to be hedged in by written statutes: he was absolute monarch in his monasteries; his personality, his activity, his vigilance, and spirit of initiative supplied the place of definite constitutions. This is why the administration of his monasteries remained in a rudimentary state. The Rule refers to provosts named by the abbot and in his absence invested with the same absolute power as he; there is a vague allusion to a body of consultors or a chapter of monks, and to an econome, or steward, and his subordinates; and we learn incidentally that there were such functionaries as cooks, rectorians, cellarers, masters of manual labor, doorkeepers and regulators. The monks were divided into two classes: seniors and juniors, but no distinction is made between novices and professed members, priests and lay-brothers. Intellectual pursuits were certainly not neglected, for we know that the school of Luxeuil was famed far and wide, but there is only a passing mention of instructors and pupils. We can infer from

certain prescriptions that the three vows which constitute the essence of the monastic life were taken by the monks, and that perseverance in their vocation was required from them, but there is not a word about the requisites for admission or the time of probation. In the Rule of St. Benedict, on the other hand, all these matters are carefully regulated, thus supplying what the Rule of St. Columban lacked, viz., eminently practical statutes for any association of monks. No wonder that, when once it became known, it was welcomed with alacrity.

Even in his own monasteries the Rule of St. Columban was gradually supplanted by that of St. Benedict.<sup>58</sup> From what has been said it will be seen that this was not due to external causes, nor to the action of any one man whose influence could be compared even remotely to that of the great Celt; it was rather the natural consequence of the peculiar character of the Columbanian Rule.

<sup>58</sup> The Rule of St. Columban was probably observed in Luxeuil and Bobbio together with that of St. Benedict till 817, when the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, at the request of Louis the Pious, made the Benedictine Rule obligatory on all the monasteries in the Carlovingian dominions.

#### IV.

##### THE SCHOOL OF LUXEUIL.

**D**ESPITE the severity of his discipline, the number of Columban's followers increased from day to day. "The fame of the man of God," says Jonas, "spread into every part of Gaul and Germany, and his praise was in the mouth of all."<sup>1</sup> Not merely the common people, but the Frankish, Alamannian, and Burgundian nobles as well regarded him with reverential admiration. The celebrity which to-day attaches to the names of the learned and the wealthy, of the great discoverers and inventors, was reserved in the ages of faith to the saints. A man or woman illustrious for virtue was the cynosure of all eyes. Columban's almost superhuman austerity, his manifest gift of prophecy, the miracles wrought through his intercession, the strict discipline that reigned in his monasteries, the power of his preaching—all this was calculated to awaken in the youth of the land the desire to see him, to hear him, and to range themselves under his leadership in the militia of Christ. Those who found the peace and rest they had sought hastened to tell their relatives and friends of their happiness and to invite them to come and share it. And thus it happened that, before Columban had been ten years in the Vosges, Luxeuil alone was peopled by more than two hundred monks.

But the aspirants to monastic perfection were not the only ones who flocked to Luxeuil: the sick, the infirm, the afflicted, came from far and near to seek relief, and not one but went away from the man of God healed or consoled, for under the Celtic pilgrim's somewhat harsh and brusque exterior beat a heart full of tenderness and compassion for suffering humanity.

There lived at that time, relates Jonas,<sup>2</sup> a certain duke, Waldelenus by name, who ruled over the territory between the Alps and the Jura. In the early days of Luxeuil—in 595

<sup>1</sup> *V. Col.*, I, 18.

<sup>2</sup> *V. Col.*, I, 14.

or 596<sup>3</sup>—this man came with his wife, Flavia, to Columban and begged him to pray to God for them, for they were blessed abundantly with this world's goods but had no son to leave them to after their death. "If you promise," replied Columban, "to consecrate to the Most High the child He will bless you with, and to choose me to be godfather at its baptism, I will implore God to grant you not only the child you will offer to Him as the first-fruits, but as many more pledges of His clemency as you shall desire." They gladly agreed to this condition, and Flavia had scarcely returned to Besançon when she felt the first joys of maternity. Waldelenus did not forget his promise: his first-born was baptized at Luxeuil and received from Columban the name of Donatus. God is never outdone in generosity: another son, Chramnelenus,<sup>4</sup> was born to Waldelenus and Flavia, and then two daughters; all were afterward remarkable for wisdom and piety and repaid their benefactor by constant fidelity and devotion during his lifetime and by zealously propagating his Rule after his death.

When still a mere child Donatus was entrusted to the monks of Luxeuil to be trained in "wisdom and piety" under the eye of his godfather. It was not unusual in the early Middle Ages for parents to dedicate their infant children to the monastic life.<sup>5</sup> Bede<sup>6</sup> tells of "a little boy, not above three years old, called Aesica", who was received into the monastery of Barking; Bede himself entered the monastery of Wearmouth at the age of seven; St. Boniface joined the sedate

<sup>3</sup> St. Donatus was made bishop of Besançon in 625 or 626, and as he could not have been consecrated bishop before his thirtieth year, he must have been born in 595 or 596 at the latest.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Fredegar, IV, 78, where Chramnelenus is mentioned among the dukes who took part in Dagobert's expedition against the Basques, 636-37. In 642 he was instrumental in bringing about the downfall of the proud Patrician Willebad, of Burgundy, and his following, under the walls of Autun. (Ibid., 90.)

<sup>5</sup> See *Rule of St. Benedict*, 59, for ceremony of consecration. St. Chrysostom was of opinion that boys should be received into the monastic schools as early as possible. (Adv. oppug. vit. monast., 3, 17.) "All children brought to the monks to be educated," says St. Basil, "shall be received; none, not even the youngest, shall be turned away." Of course not all children educated in the monasteries, but only those who had been really consecrated to God<sup>7</sup> and had taken the vows by proxy (the so-called *oblatis*) were afterwards obliged to remain in the monasteries. The practice of consecrating infants irrevocably to God was forbidden in later times.

<sup>6</sup> H. E., IV, 8.

ranks of the Saxon Benedictines at five; Walafrid Strabo was brought to the monastery of Reichenau when he could just talk, and Paul of Verdun passed literally from the cradle to the cloister.

How did Donatus and his little fellow-pupils spend their time in the monastery? Clothed in their tiny white-hooded gowns, they would observe the monastic rule to the best of their very limited ability; sit in choir with the older monks, go to the refectory and the recreation grounds with them, and, when the hours for study came, some learned brother would teach them their letters. When the mysteries of the Roman alphabet had been mastered with the aid of letters cut out of wood or stone, or written or impressed on sweetmeats, reading and writing were taught them, not simultaneously, as is done to-day, but successively in the order named. For the writing exercises wooden tablets were used on which the children wrote with ink or chalk; the more advanced pupils were allowed waxed tablets and styles, or parchment and goose quills. The reading and writing lessons were followed by some rudimentary instruction in arithmetic and the use of the abacus, or calculating frame, and then the pupils were ready to begin the curriculum of the Seven Liberal Arts by a study of Grammar.

Grammar meant more in those days than it does now. It was universally regarded as the queen of the sciences and was defined as the "science of interpreting poets and historians," and the "rule of speaking and writing well." As Latin was still a living tongue, being the language of the Church and the State, and as the monks were permitted to use no other in their daily intercourse, the medieval boy could gain a working knowledge of it even from the grammatical treatises of a Donatus or a Priscian. Besides, the Latin which he learned to speak and write was not that of the Augustan age, which our collegians with much fear and trembling strive to acquire, but a language formed on purpose, as it were, to suit the new civilization springing up out of the ruins of the Roman world—the language in which St. Benedict and St. Columban wrote their Rules and the hagiographers of the sixth and seventh centuries the life-stories of their saintly heroes.

The first reader of a seventh-century schoolboy was not a picture book about cat and dog and bird, but the Psalter, or Book of Psalms. The one hundred and fifty glorious songs of David and the other Hebrew lyrists had to be learnt by heart. Bible stories replaced the nursery tale, and the Psalms and the Alleluia supplanted the pagan nursery rhyme. Such had been the practice of the Church since the days of Basil, Chrysostom,<sup>7</sup> and Jerome.<sup>8</sup>

With the great Fathers of the Church, whom he admired so much, Columban shared a noble enthusiasm for the literature of ancient Rome and recommended its study to his monks. In a metrical epistle, saturated with quotations from Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, he tells his friend Sethus to despise the transitory pleasures of life and to strive instead after treasures that will never moulder or decay, to wit, "the dogmas of the Divine Law, the chaste life of the holy Fathers, and whatever the learned masters wrote of old or the eloquent poets sang".

Dispice, quae pereunt, fugitivae gaudia vitae.  
Non fragiles secteris opes et inania lucra,  
Nec te sollicitet circumflua copia rerum.  
Sint tibi divitiae divinae dogmata legis  
Sanctorumque patrum castae moderamina vitae,  
Omnia, quae dociles scripserunt ante magistri  
Vel quae doctiloqui cecinerunt carmina vates.  
Has cape, divitias semper contemne caducas.

—*Versus S. Columbani ad Sethum*, 8-15.

The Adonic verses *To Fidolius* display a familiarity with classic poetry and mythology such as is found, in the seventh century, only in the writings of Aldhelm of Malmesbury. Columban invites his friend to attempt similar verses, giving him at the same time a minute description of their mechanism. "If you wish to write verses such as those with which that illustrious poetess of the Greeks, Sappho by name, used to charm her contemporaries, let a dactyl always be followed by

<sup>7</sup> "The child must be made acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures as early as possible. The teachings of the Bible are a wholesome antidote against the evil inclinations that manifest themselves even at this tender age; they are the fountain that waters the soul." (St. Chrysostom, 60 Hom. in Matth.)

<sup>8</sup> See St. Jerome's *Letter to Laeta*.



a trochee; but it is also permitted to replace the final short syllable by a long one":

Si tibi cura  
Forte volenti  
Carmina tali  
Condere versu,  
Semper ut unus  
Ordine certo  
Dactilus istic  
Incipiat pes;  
Inde sequenti  
Parte trocheus  
Proximus illi  
Rite locetur;  
Saepe duabus  
Claudere longis  
Ultima versus  
Iure licebit.

The encouragement given by Columban to the study of the classics bore abundant fruit. His monks imbibed his respect, if not his enthusiasm, for the works of the ancients; and if they were not very successful in imitating the style of Virgil, Cicero, Horace, and Livy, they were at least careful to hand down to posterity copies of the masterpieces of these writers. In every monastery there was a well-stocked library, and the abbots took care to keep the books in good order by having them regularly rebound.<sup>9</sup> When he wanted a new book, Columban did not scruple to beg it even from the Pope himself.<sup>10</sup>

By good fortune a ninth-century catalogue of the library of the monastery of Rebais in Burgundy has come down to us. As Rebais was founded by St. Owen, and had for its first abbot St. Agilus, a disciple of Columban, a glance at this catalogue will give us a fair idea of the books used by the pupils of Luxeuil. Besides a large number of sacramentaries, antiphonaries, legends, lives of saints, and passionals, there are

<sup>9</sup> *V. Col.*, II, 60. On the eve of his death, Attala had the books of the Bobbio library bound: "libros ligaminibus firmat."

<sup>10</sup> See Columban's letter to Pope Gregory the Great, in which he asks him to send him his latest work on the Prophet Ezechiel, a commentary on Zacharias, and on the Cantic of Canticles.

listed commentaries on Genesis, Josue, Jeremias, and Daniel; the Dialogues, the *Liber Regulae Pastoralis* and the Homilies on Ezechiel of St. Gregory the Great and one *Registrum* of his Letters; most of the works of St. Augustine and of St. Jerome; St. Ambrose's *De Officiis*; the writings of Prosper of Aquitaine, St. Bede, and St. Isidore of Seville; a collection of Patristic Homilies, a Lectionary and a Missal; the Poems of Sedulius (two copies), Arator, and Aldhelm; two large and two small Priscians and two Donatus; two copies of Virgil and Horace and one of Boëthius; Cicero's *De Senectute* and *De Amicitia* and the Comedies of Terence; a pharmacopeia and a book with Irish text ("unus textus scoticus"), etc.<sup>11</sup>

The study of Grammar was followed by a course in Rhetoric. This consisted chiefly of practical exercises in composition, especially in writing letters and drafting legal documents. The training of the intellect, in the more restricted sense of the word, was left to Dialectics, with which the Trivium, or triple key to the world of the mind, was brought to a close.

Those who showed aptitude for mathematical studies then took up the branches of the Quadrivium: Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music. As the Arabian numerals were as yet unknown to the Western world, neither master nor pupil could advance very far in the science of numbers; an elementary knowledge of Arithmetic, however, was considered indispensable for a proper understanding of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>12</sup> Instruction in Geometry such as is imparted in our higher schools to-day was probably unknown throughout the Middle Ages, but the triumphs achieved by the medieval architects prove that geometrical knowledge must have been both thorough and widespread. From his letters on the Paschal controversy and from the seventh chapter of his Monastic Rule we know that Columban was well versed in the astronomical lore of his day, and he no doubt insisted that the scholars of Luxeuil should be made familiar with

<sup>11</sup> Greith, *Gesch. der altirischen Kirche*, p. 291.

<sup>12</sup> Arithmetic was, of course, necessary for calculating the annual cycle of feasts (*computus*). The knowledge of the Computus was considered indispensable for the cleric. "Take the Computus out of the world," says Cassiodorus (*de Artib.*, 4) "and all will be enveloped in blind ignorance. Those who cannot cipher cannot be distinguished from the brute beast."

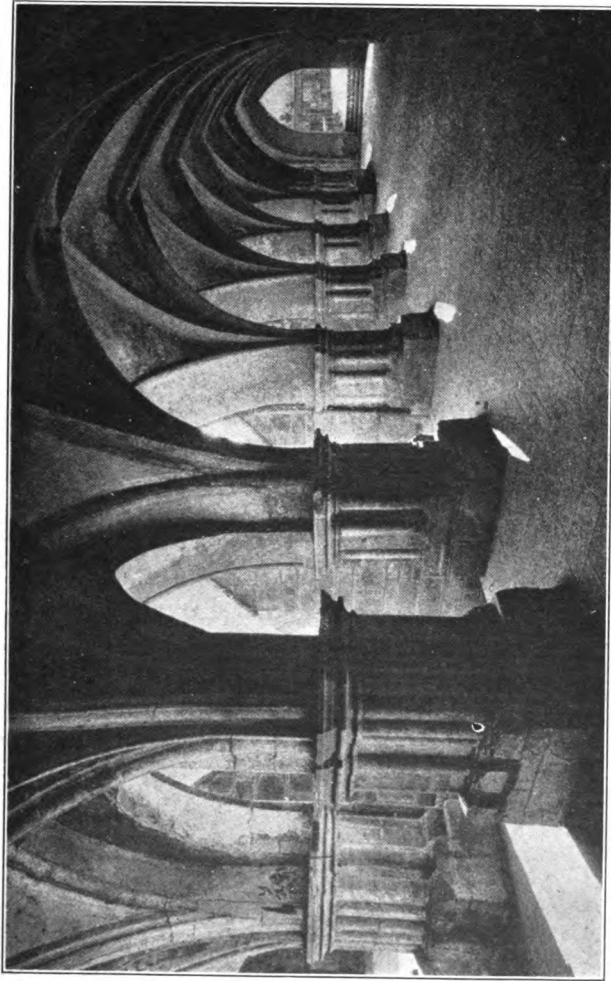
"the course of the sun, moon, and stars" so as to be able to fix the date of Easter and the chief festival days of the year, and to account for the frequent changes in the length of the canonical hours.

Very special importance was attached to the study of Music. Music was considered so excellent and useful that a person ignorant of it was in general held to be unfit for the sacred ministry. As notation was still very defective, consisting of *pneumes* or *neumes*, that is, points, dashes, and hooks to indicate the pitch of the tones, proficiency in the musical art was acquired only with much difficulty, and the singing-master appears to have used his baton quite as often to beat his pupils as to beat time. "How many blows and pains," we read in a sermon attributed to St. Columban, "must they submit to who wish to learn music."<sup>13</sup> Very severe punishment was meted out to those who stumbled through the Psalms or spoiled the singing by unnecessary coughing or laughing. Alcuin records this saying of the Venerable Bede: "I know that angels visit the canonical hours and the congregations of the brethren. What if they do not find me among the brethren? May they not say, 'Where is Bede?'" St. Benedict assigns the same reason for the necessity of singing the Divine Office properly. "Let us always be mindful," he says, "of the words of the Prophet: 'In the sight of the Angels I will sing unto Thee.' Therefore let us consider how we ought to conduct ourselves before the face of the Divinity and His Angels; and let us so stand and sing that our voice may accord with our intention."<sup>14</sup>

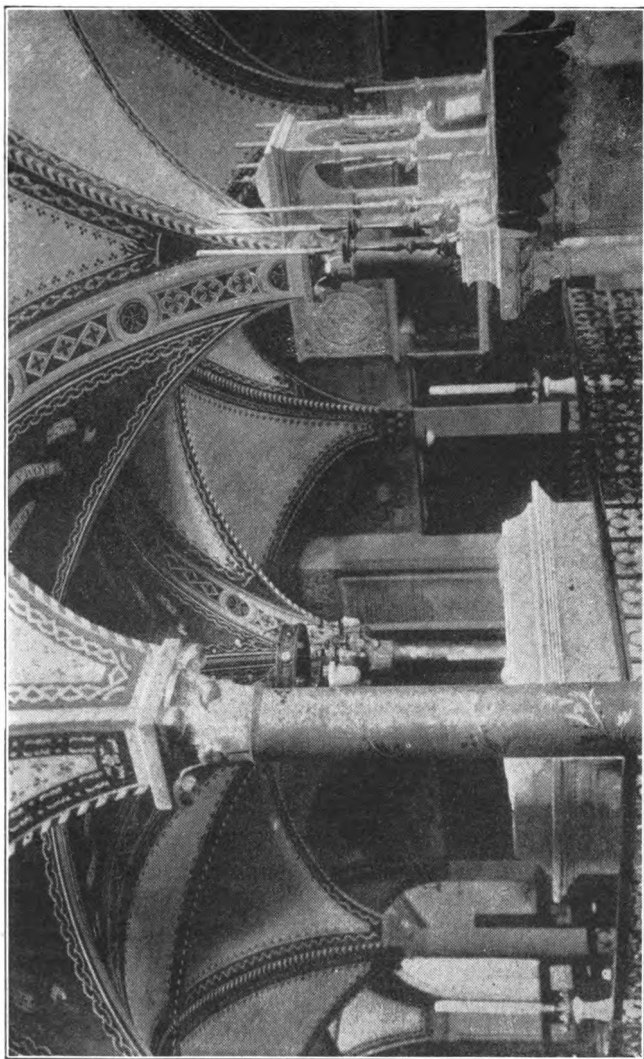
If the liberal arts were fostered in Luxeuil, the non-liberal arts were by no means neglected. "If a brother cannot apply himself to the study of letters, sacred or profane," says Cassiodorus in his treatise on the Liberal Arts, "let him remember that it is no mean and ignoble occupation to cultivate the gardens, to sow the fields, to gather the beautiful fruit of the trees, for we read in the Psalms: 'Thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands; blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.'" Columban went a step further than the sage of Squil-

<sup>13</sup> *Instructiones sive Sermones Sti. Columbani*, IV (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, t. 80, p. 233). The real author is a disciple of Faustus of Riez. (See below.)

<sup>14</sup> *Reg. S. Benedicti*, c. 19.



ABBEY CLOISTER, LUXEUIL  
XV CENTURY



CRYPT OF THE BASILICA OF ST. COLUMBAN, BOBBIO, ITALY

lace and enjoined manual labor on all his monks. Daily prayer, daily study, daily manual labor—this was his educational program. Although St. Valery, who entered Luxeuil about the year 600, displayed remarkable talent for study, he had to spend several hours each day in the large monastery garden, weeding it and ridding it of the worms and insects which had settled there in alarming numbers.<sup>15</sup> St. Amatus, another pupil of Luxeuil, was so skilful in the management of bees that his services as instructor in this difficult art were sought far and wide. His aptest pupils were the nuns of a neighboring monastery who could catch a swarm with ease by spreading a mixture of milk and sweet-smelling herbs over a vessel, or cause a hive to swarm by striking a kettle with a stick.<sup>16</sup>

As in other points of the Rule so also in regard to manual labor Columban set the good example. In spite of his office and his years, he would sally forth at the head of the monks to clear the forests, till the fields, and harvest the crops. A newly-cleared field belonging to the monastery of Fontaine promised a splendid crop; but incessant rains made harvesting impossible, and the grain was in imminent danger of rotting on the stalk. Full of trust in Providence, and with a fervent prayer for fair weather, the abbot armed himself with his sickle and ordered the whole community out into the pouring rain. Placing three Irishmen, Comininus, Eunocus and Equonanus, and a Breton, Gurganus, at the four corners of the field, he fell to work in the centre with the rest. Though not a little surprised at what they regarded as an unaccountable whim of their superior, all plied their instruments with a will, and before long the sun broke through the heavy rain-clouds and quickly dried the drooping sheaves. From the neighboring farms and villages the people came to see the unwonted spectacle of scores of white-gowned monks toiling like serfs or hired servants to turn the wilderness into a cultivated landscape. One of these, the parish priest Winioc,<sup>17</sup> took home with him a lasting memorial of his first visit. Columban and

<sup>15</sup> Vit. S. Walarici, abb. Leucon, c. 6.

<sup>16</sup> V. S. Amati, c. 22.

<sup>17</sup> The name is Celtic acc. to H. Zimmer. Winioc, or Winnoc, was probably a Gallic Celt or a Breton.

his monks were felling trees in the forest and as he was looking on, astonished at the ease with which they drove the wedges into the trunk of a knotty old oak, a flying wedge struck him with such force in the forehead that the frontal bone was laid bare and the blood gushed forth in streams. Columban hastened to his side and, after kneeling for a moment in fervent prayer, took a little spittle and put it on the gaping wound, which closed up so well that it hardly left a scar.<sup>18</sup>

How with only one meagre meal a day the monks were able to do the hard work that pioneer farming calls for, is one of the many problems presented by early monasticism. It seems, however, that the daily fast enjoined by the Rule was relaxed for those who worked in the fields. Visiting Fontaine one day, Columban found sixty of the brethren engaged in breaking with their hoes the heavy clods in a freshly ploughed field, and when he saw how difficult their work was he told them to take some refreshment. "But we have only a few loaves and a little beer left," was their answer. "Bring what you have," said the abbot; and when he had blessed the scanty store, it proved sufficient for all.<sup>19</sup>

And what a blessing in disguise hard work could upon occasion prove to be! Once when he had retired into the solitude of the great wilderness, Columban learned that during his absence a virulent disease had invaded Luxeuil and attacked so many of the inmates that hardly anyone was well enough to attend to the others. He returned to the monastery without a moment's delay and commanded the sick brothers to get up and beat out the grain on the threshing-floor. Many obeyed and were cured, and for these the abbot ordered a special meal to be prepared. Those, on the other hand, who had listened to the dictates of human prudence rather than to the voice of obedience recovered only after a long and dangerous illness.<sup>20</sup>

This was not the only case in which unhesitating obedience was promptly rewarded. Whilst reaping corn with the brothers in a field near the hamlet of Baniaritia, Theudegisil wielded his sickle so awkwardly that he all but cut off one of

<sup>18</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

the fingers of his left-hand. Attracted by his cries for help, Columban bound up his wound and told him to go on with his work as usual. He did so, and to his great joy found that his finger was completely healed. "Theudegisil himself related this incident to me," says Jonas, "and showed me the finger in question."<sup>21</sup>

In such and similar labors did the monks of Luxeuil spend the greater part of the day; for, besides its social usefulness and, under the circumstances of the times, its absolute necessity, severe labor was regarded by Columban as a penitential exercise and an excellent means of gaining self-control. Of course only the older and sturdier boys could be set to this kind of work, the younger ones being variously employed according to their capacity. A clever lad like Chagnoald,<sup>22</sup> the future bishop of Laon, would be selected to act as private secretary to the abbot or his provosts. Others, like Domoal<sup>23</sup> and Sonichar,<sup>24</sup> were attached to the personal service of Columban, accompanying him on his expeditions into the forest, gathering the herbs and wild apples that were his sole nourishment during his periods of solitary retirement, or, in the absence of all other food, angling or netting for fish in the L'Ognon or the Breuchin.

Like all true educators, the abbot of Luxeuil rated training higher than instruction, moral discipline higher than mental culture. No pupil of his was spoiled for sparing of the rod, as a glance at his Cenobitical Rule, to which young and old alike were subjected, will show to evidence. He strove to imbue his disciples with a deep sense of their dignity as children of God, a dignity which required of them humility, fraternal charity, forbearance, politeness.<sup>25</sup> Let nothing be done through contention, he tells them, quoting the words of the Apostle,<sup>26</sup> neither by vainglory, but in humility let each esteem others better than himself. Lying, idleness, curiosity, quarreling, meddling with the concerns of others, were punished with the rod or by the imposition of a fast on bread and water. During times of silence the boys were not al-

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 9 and 19.

<sup>25</sup> Col. Reg. Coenob., 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 17 and 26.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>26</sup> Phil. 2:3. Reg. Coenob., 5.



lowed to communicate with one another through the medium of a third party. If a boy was told by a senior to do what was against the Rule, he was to answer: "You know I am not allowed to do this"; if the other insisted, the boy was to say: "I will do as you command", in order not to be guilty of an act of disobedience; his bad councillor, however, was punished with three fasts or condemned to keep silence during three recreations.<sup>27</sup>

But Columban made use of more effectual means than fasting or the rod to train his charges to become "the light of the world and the salt of the earth". He prescribed daily confession and frequent Communion for them, and in numerous conferences given on Sundays in the Church<sup>28</sup> he reminded them of the nothingness of earthly life with all its goods, of the strict account that must be given at the end, of the wretched

<sup>27</sup> Reg. Coenob., 8, the only chapter of the Rule in which boys ("juven-culi") are expressly mentioned.

<sup>28</sup> In spite of the well-nigh overwhelming external evidence for the Columbanian authorship of the seventeen *Instructiones Variæ, sive Sermones* (Migne's *Pat. Lat.*, t. 80, 23 Oss.), only a limited number can be ascribed with certainty to the abbot of Luxeuil. Professor Albert Hauck, of Leipsic, was the first to draw attention to the fact that the quotation from Faustus in Instruct. II is found in one of the *Homiliae ad monachos*, published by Migne (t. 50, 833-859) under the name of Eucherius. Taking for granted that Columban was the author of the Instruction in question, Fleming reasoned that, as Comgall was Columban's teacher, Comgall and Faustus must be identical. His opinion is confirmed by a notice in the so-called Martyrology of St. Gall (A. D. 894). Under V Id. Jun. (9 June) Notker Balbulus says of St. Columba of Iona: "Qui cum plurimos discipulos vel socios sanctitatis suae pares habuisset, unum tamen Comgellum, Iainæ Fausti nomine illustrem, praeceptorem beatissimi Columbani, virtutum reliquit heredem". Whether Comgall was also called Faustus is a question of minor importance—one thing is certain: the quotation in Instruct. II, beginning with the words: "Si quando terrae operarius" is from Faustus, abbot of Lérins and bishop of Riez (400 or 405 to 485), and to him, and not to Eucherius, of Lyons, must be ascribed the authorship of the *Homiliae ad monachos*. (For Faustus see Engelbrecht, *Studien über die Schriften des Bischofs von Reji Faustus*, 1889; Koch, *Der h. Faustus*. The letters of Faustus are published in M. G. H., Auct. Antiq., VIII; his other works in *Corpus SS. Eccl. lat.*, XXI.) Hence it is certain that the author of Instructio II, when he spoke of his "master Faustus", could have had in mind no one but Faustus of Riez. The author of Instruct. II is also the author of Instruct. I, as a glance at the style and contents will show. Hauck was at first inclined to attribute all the Instructions to a disciple of Faustus or to Faustus himself (*Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft*, 1885, 357-364). but Seebass convinced him of the authenticity of Instruct. III, XI, XVI and XVII (*Zeitsch. für Kirchengeschichte*, 1892, 513 ss.; Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, I, p. 261, 3rd ed.). In a Fleury MS. of the eleventh century these four sermons are bound together under the title: *Ordo S. Columbani, abbatis, de Vita et Actione Monachorum*. They have been edited with a critical apparatus by Seebass in the *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1893, pp. 78 ss. It is this edition that is quoted in the text.

state of those who not only live in the world, but, so to speak, carry the world about with them, of the heavy load of sin that bears man down, a load hard indeed to get rid of, but one which must be shaken off, if they do not wish to be lost eternally; and directed their attention to the choicest and most hidden of all possessions, divine grace, and showed them how to acquire it and how to keep it.

Columban's manner of preaching was as simple as the character of his audience. His instructions are of unequal length, but even the longest does not exceed twelve hundred words. Although in some manuscripts they are called *Sermones*, they might be more fittingly described as addresses or allocutions. Their aim is not to teach doctrine, but simply to drive home some practical truth, to bring the listener to self-knowledge and to hatred of sin. Columban seldom stops to develop a thought or to prove a statement. With short, oftentimes epigrammatic, sentences, with questions and exclamations he closes with his hearers and forces them to take to heart what he tells them.

In the first Instruction<sup>29</sup>—*Cogita non quid es, sed quid eris*—he draws a parallel between the rapidity with which this world is swept away and the everlastingness of the goods of the world to come, to show thereby that this life is not life indeed, but merely a brief moment given us in which to purchase, by selling ourselves, the eternal life beyond the sky. He begins with characteristic abruptness:

Consider not, poor man, what thou art, but what thou wilt be; what thou art lasts but for a moment, what thou wilt be is eternal. Be not slothful for thyself, but rather acquire in a short time what thou wilt possess forever. Overcome the dislike for present exertion by thinking of the reward to come. If the world beckons thee, remember that it flees from thee, that your pursuit of it is vain. Why dost thou not follow after that which never flees from thee? What doth it profit to gaze at a shadow reflected in the water? What do joy and happiness tasted in a dream profit thee? After all, dreams, be they never so long, are shortlived; and life's joys are like dreams in a dark night. Awake, therefore, O my son, out of the night, and seek the light that thou mayest see and be seen;

<sup>29</sup> Ed. Seebass. It is the sixteenth in Migne.

light your lamp and read. Awake; be not seduced by dreams and deceived by false imaginings. Thy life is a wheel that is ever turning and running on, and never waits for thee. It is thy duty to keep up with it. Thou hast nothing on earth, O man; thou wilt die naked as thou wert born into it. Thou hast nothing on earth but the prospect of Heaven, which is thy inheritance, provided thou dost not forfeit it on earth. But if thou hast lost it already, sell thyself in order to regain it. What do I say, Sell thyself? Sell thy vices, and buy life. Thou mayest perhaps wish to know what these vices are. Above all things sell pride, the root-vice, and buy humility, and thou wilt be like unto Christ, who saith: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." <sup>30</sup>

The second Instruction <sup>31</sup>—*Quid in mundo optimum est?*—treats of contempt of the world and of self, and of the love of things eternal. The choicest thing in the world, says Columban, is to please Him who made it. The world together with the goods it offers is transitory and therefore to be despised. It deceives us, because it does not show itself as it is. It will pass away; it is daily passing away. What can it boast of that will not some day disappear? In what does contempt of the world consist? In the renouncement of pleasures and riches; in contempt of self. "He is victor over the world who, while still in the flesh, dies to himself, to his vices, to his passions; no one who spares himself can hate the world, because he must love or hate the world in himself. Only he lives well who either never has to repent or is ever repenting." The wise man will love nothing in the world, because there is nothing lasting here below: "the world rests, as it were, on pillars of vanity". The sole object of his love must be the eternal. This is the only true good. "O wretched state of man! We are bound to love that which is far from us and uncomprehended by us and hidden from our eyes while we live in the prison-house of this body. But it will not be always far, and hidden, and unknown; for he would assuredly have been born in vain to whom the eternal were to remain unknown forever. Therefore even now we must long after it and love it: far better an hour's patience here than an eternity of fruitless remorse hereafter."

<sup>30</sup> Matth. 11: 29.

<sup>31</sup> The third in Migne.

At the end of his first Instruction Columban enumerates the vices that we must sell in order that "the flesh may be destroyed and the spirit saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ: gluttony, fornication, covetousness, anger, sadness, sloth, vainglory and pride; "which", he adds, "it were a gain to lose even though we got nothing in exchange". In the third Instruction<sup>32</sup> he reverts to these eight principal or capital sins,<sup>33</sup> "which drag men down to destruction", contenting himself, however, with simply setting before his hearers the Scriptural texts bearing on them and indicating briefly how they must be combated.

Of gluttony it is said: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."<sup>34</sup> Of fornication: "Fornicators and adulterers God will judge."<sup>35</sup> Of covetousness: "The desire of money is the root of all evil."<sup>36</sup> Of anger: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of hell fire."<sup>37</sup> Of sadness: "The sorrow of the world worketh death."<sup>38</sup> Of sloth: "Idleness hath taught much evil."<sup>39</sup> Of vainglory: "His stench shall ascend, because he hath boasted of his works."<sup>40</sup> Of pride: "God resisteth the proud,"<sup>41</sup> and "Whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled."<sup>42</sup>

According to the Holy Scripture, therefore, these vices are source and cause of all evil, and must be cured by the practice of the virtues opposed to them. Gluttony is overcome by fasting from the ninth hour to the ninth hour and by the sparing use of the plainest food. "Fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints":<sup>43</sup> guard against it by an

<sup>32</sup> Ed. Seebass. The seventeenth in Migne.

<sup>33</sup> Evagrius Ponticus (c. 390) was the first to enumerate *eight* capital sins (Migne, *P. G.*, 40, 1271-1278): *γαστριμαργία, πορνεία, φιλαργυρία, λύπη, ὀργή, ἀκηδία, κενοδοξία, ὑπερηφάνια*, which he calls *λογισμοί*. Columban took his enumeration from Cassian (Coll. V). Gregory the Great (*Moralia*, 31, 45, 87) counted seven; Peter Lombard (Sent. 2 Dist., 42, 8) made one sin of *acedia* and *tristitia*, and since his time all theologians speak of only seven capital sins. (Cf. Rauschen, *Eucharistie und Bussakrament in den ersten 6 Jahrhunderten*, Freiburg, 1910, p. 190.)

<sup>34</sup> Luke 21:34. Columban evidently had this text in mind when he wrote "Nolite seduci in saturitate ventris,"—a sentence not found anywhere in Holy Writ.

<sup>35</sup> Heb. 13:4.

<sup>37</sup> Matth. 5:22.

<sup>39</sup> Ecclus. 33:29.

<sup>41</sup> I Pet. 5:5 (Prov. 8:34).

<sup>48</sup> Eph. 5:3.

<sup>36</sup> I Tim. 6:10.

<sup>38</sup> II Cor. 7:10.

<sup>40</sup> Joel 2:20.

<sup>42</sup> Matth. 23:12.

ever solicitous and apprehensive chastity and continence. Covetousness is vanquished by our having nothing that we call our own and by possessing all things in common. Anger is bridled by patience and meekness. Sadness is conquered by spiritual joy and the hope of future blessedness. The fickleness engendered by sloth is corrected by remaining in one place, as the Scripture says: "If the spirit of him that hath power ascend upon thee, leave not thy place".<sup>44</sup> Vainglory, finally, and self-exaltation and pride are put down by humility, compunction of heart, and fear of God.

The fourth Instruction <sup>45</sup>—*Moses in lege scripsit*—appears to be a commentary on certain points of the Monastic Rule, especially those relating to fraternal charity. Columban bases the obligation of loving God on the fact that we are made to His image and likeness.

Consider the grandeur of this word, God, the almighty, the invisible, the incomprehensible, the ineffable, the inestimable, formed man of the slime of the earth and ennobled him with the dignity of His own image. . . By loving Him, we are but giving back what we received from Him at our creation; for love of God is nothing but the renewal of His image. However, to be true, this love must not be "in word alone, nor in tongue, but in deeds", which prove it to be true.

Let us give back to our God, to our Father, His image undefiled; let us give it back to Him in holiness, because He is holy; in love, because He is love; in godliness and truth, because He is holiness and truth. Let us not be the painters of an image that is not His! He who is ungovernable, prone to anger, and proud, is painting the image of a tyrant. Therefore, lest perchance we make tyrannical images of ourselves, let Christ paint His image in us, the image which He painted with the words: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you."<sup>46</sup>

But what does it profit to know that peace is good, if we do not keep it with all diligence? The best things are commonly also the most fragile, and the more precious a thing is, the greater care must be bestowed upon it. Such a precious and fragile thing is charity. . . . He who would preserve it must be careful not to say what he pleases nor to move his tongue in response to every motion of his mind. Therefore, do not make many words, but be content to speak

<sup>44</sup> Eccles. 10:4.

<sup>45</sup> Ed. Seebass; the eleventh in Migne.

<sup>46</sup> John 14:27.

what is necessary, for we must give an account not only of every injurious word, but also of every idle word. Men love nothing so much as to carry on idle conversations, to speak ill of others in their absence and to meddle in their affairs. Hence let those who cannot say with the Prophet: "The Lord hath given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary,"<sup>47</sup> be silent, or, if they do speak, let their words be peaceful; for, no matter how wise a man may be, he will offend less with few words than with many. . . . When a person lies, reviles, slanders, he stabs himself with his own sword. "Speak not ill of others", says the Scripture, "lest thou be rooted out".<sup>48</sup> Let each one see to it that for his slandering of others he be not rooted out from the land of the living. No one ever slanders one whom he loves, for slander is the first-born of hate. . . .

A house from which these sins against charity have not been banished is beset with many dangers; for, as the Apostle says: "If you bite and devour one another, take heed you be not consumed one of another".<sup>49</sup> If "he that loveth not abideth in death". where will his place be that speaks ill of others? . . . What is more emphatically, more repeatedly inculcated by the divine law than love? And yet, how rarely do we find anyone who fulfills this law? What can we say to excuse ourselves? Can we say: It is a hard, a toilsome law? But love is not toil; on the contrary, it is sweet; it is a soothing, salutary medicine for the heart. Nothing is dearer to God than spiritual love, which is the greatest and the first commandment in the law, according to those words of the Apostle: "He that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law".<sup>50</sup> Now he who fulfills the law of charity, has life everlasting, as St. John says: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren; he that loveth not, abideth in death. Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself".<sup>51</sup> Therefore, we must either have charity or hope for nothing but eternal pain; for "love is the fulfilling of the law".<sup>52</sup> With this love may He in His mercy fill us more abundantly, He who is the Giver of peace and the God of charity, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for all ages of ages. Amen.

<sup>47</sup> Isaias 50:4.

<sup>48</sup> Prov. 20:13, according to the Septuagint; *μη ἀγάπα καταλάλειν ἵνα μη ἐξαρθῇς*. The passage is not found in the Vulgate. (Seebass.)

<sup>49</sup> Gal. 5:15.

<sup>50</sup> Rom. 13:8.

<sup>51</sup> I John 3:14-15.

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 13:10.

Columban continued his loving solicitude for the spiritual welfare of his disciples even after they had bidden farewell to the hospitable roof that had sheltered them during the days of their boyhood and youth. With a number of them he kept up a correspondence in verse and in prose, encouraging them to persevere in the practice of the Christian virtues, especially temperance and chastity, or tracing for them a program of monastic perfection. Only five such letters have come down to us, three in verse addressed to Hunald, Sethus, and Fidolius (to which reference has already been made), and two in prose, to two young men whose names have not been preserved. The latter are so characteristic of Columban and his educational ideals that we cannot help hoping the reader will be pleased, in spite of the rudeness of the translation, to have the main part of them.

#### COLUMBAN TO A YOUNG FRIEND.<sup>53</sup>

Though I have often written to you on the principles of morality and the formation of character, you ask for still further instruction. You know the saying: He who is not satisfied with a little, will not profit by much.<sup>54</sup> But as exhortation is a safeguard for some, a consolation for others, and a means of acquiring perfection for those who take it to heart and put it into practice, our dear young men must be frequently instructed in order that the pleasures of epistolary intercourse may help them to overcome the bitterness of the war waging within them.

Conquer in this war, conquer the beast within you, viz. pride and concupiscence. Be strong in humility and humble in authority, simple in the spirit of faith, well-bred in manners, inexorable toward yourself, kindly to others; be pure in friendship, cunning amidst snares, hard against effeminacy of every sort, eager to bear hardships; joyful in adversity, not elated in prosperity; unshaken in tribulation, slow to anger, swift to learn, "slow also to speak", and, as St. James says, "swift to hear"; slow to revenge, prompt in action; be amiable to the good, uncompromising with the wicked, gentle with the weak, severe with the foolish, upright with your superiors, humble toward your inferiors; sober always, chaste always, modest and patient at all times, and full of zeal; never

<sup>53</sup> Instructio XIV in Migne. Fleming (*Collectanea sacra*) also published it among the Instructions, but remarks that it is out of place there.

<sup>54</sup> The same quotation occurs in Instr. II, ed. Seebass; the author is unknown.

covetous, but always generous, if not in deed at least in intention; fast at the proper time, watch at the proper time; be punctual in fulfilling your duties, persevering in your studies, undismayed in storm and stress, bold in the defence of the truth, wary of quarrels. In the presence of the good let your manner be humble; in the presence of the wicked, inflexible. Be gentle in giving, unremitting in charity, just in all things; forget injuries, but remember benefits. Be obedient to the aged, obliging to the young, not overweening to your equals. Vie with the perfect, never envy those who are better than yourself; do not be angry with those who have outdistanced you; do not speak slightly of those who linger on the way; give ear to those who urge you on. When you are weary and cast down, do not lose heart; weep over your failings, but rejoice in the hope that is in you. Though you see that you are making progress, harbor a wholesome fear of the uncertain issue of life.

This, my dear young friend, is the advice I have to give you. If you follow it out, you will be exceedingly happy, because you will be ever the same in good fortune or ill; you will be prepared to meet every attack of the enemy with a steady eye, checking all cupidity, nurturing the seeds of good, always growing in virtue, always acquiring greater perfection, always aiming at higher things, always wrestling for the palm of victory, always thirsting for divine things. Follow this teaching to the best of your ability, and you will be happy. Put away all childish passionate desires, bring your body into subjection to your mind, and after a brief period of warfare you will receive an eternal recompense!

The second letter is a poetical amplification or paraphrase of a portion of the instruction on the vanity and misery of human life.<sup>55</sup> Though not a poem in the strict sense of the word, Usher<sup>56</sup> assigned to it the first place among Columban's poetical compositions.

#### COLUMBAN TO A FRIEND.

The world passes away; it is daily on the wane. No man lives always: "as all men came into the world, so shall they return". All the proud, all the fleet are overtaken by death. What they would not give up for Christ, the avaricious lose to the last farthing

<sup>55</sup> Instr. II, ed. Seebass.

<sup>56</sup> Ep. Hib., p. 6. It is written in a loose kind of rimed prose, which the French call "prose carrée". This perhaps explains why Migne printed it twice; once among the *Letters* (Epist. XV, p. 283), and again, among the *Poems* (Carmina, V, p. 294).



at an unseasonable time. Others gather after them. In their life they hardly dare to give a trifle to God ; in death they leave all and nothing remains to them. The present life, to which they cling, is daily slipping away from them ; but the punishment which they are preparing for themselves, they cannot escape. The delights of the fleeting hour they strive to gather, and to the seducer they lend a willing ear. " They love darkness rather than the light ",<sup>57</sup> and do not trouble to take the Master of Life for their guide. . . . Blind as they are, they do not see what is in store for the sinner after death, nor what wickedness brings upon the wicked.

Think well on all this, my friend. Love not the glare and gaudiness of the world. " For all flesh is grass ", however it may blossom and smell sweet, " and all the glory thereof is as the flower of the grass. When the sun rises, the grass fades, and the flower thereof falls off." <sup>58</sup> So also is the time of youth, if it is not clothed with virtue. The beauty of men grows old, and withers, and is blotted out by sorrows and cares. The shining face of Christ is lovely beyond compare and deserves infinitely more love than the frail flower of the flesh. Be not deceived, my son, by the beauty of woman, by whom death came into the world. Many have fallen victims to the penal flames because they would not renounce their sinful lusts. Taste not of the drink of wickedness ; many indeed, intoxicated by it, laugh gaily ; but know that, though they rejoice now, they will in the end weep bitterly.

Remember, dearest friend, that lust is like unto a deadly bite that puts an end to all sweetness. Walk not rashly the path of life ; think how many have suffered shipwreck. Thou dost tread amidst snares, in which many an unwary one has been caught ; take heed whither thy feet carry thee. Lift up the eyes of thy heart above the earth ; love the dear company of the Angels. How blessed the family that dwells there above—where the aged groan not, nor infants cry ; where no voice is silent in the praise of the Lord ; where neither hunger nor thirst is known, where the heavenly inhabitants are fed with heavenly food ; where no one dies, because no one is born ; where a royal banquet is spread ; where no discord is heard ; where life is fresh and enduring and consumed by no fear of death nor any other care. Rejoicing that life's troubles are over, they will look on the King of Joy : they will reign with Him who reigns, rejoice with Him who rejoices. Then pain and sorrow and trouble shall be no more. Then the King of kings, the King of purity, shall be seen of the pure of heart.

<sup>57</sup> John 3 : 19.

<sup>58</sup> Eccclus. 14 : 18 ; I Pet. 1 : 24.

Thus did the Celtic pilgrim, by word and writing, but above all by his example, train the sons of the Gaul and the Teuton to become, under the impulse of the Divine Spirit, what those troubled times needed most—pioneers of civilization, teachers of the people in agriculture and the trades, missionaries of the Gospel, preachers of penance. The contemplation of the marvels they achieved in the world of nature and of grace caused a Protestant poet to exclaim :

Gegrüßet seid ihr mir, ihr Morgensterne  
 Der Vorzeit, die den Alemannen einst  
 In ihre Dunkelheit den Strahl des Lichts,  
 In ihre tapfere Wildheit Milde brachten!—  
 Beatus, Lucius und Fridolin  
 Und Kolumban und Gallus Magnoald,  
 Othmar und Meinrad, Notker und Winfrid—  
 Ihr kamet nicht mit Orpheus' Leierton,  
 In phrygisch-wilden Bakchustänzen nicht,  
 Noch mit dem blutigen Schwert in eurer Hand :  
 In eurer Hand ein Evangelium  
 Des Friedens und ein heilig Kreuz, mit ihm  
 Die Pflugschar war es, die die Welt bezwang.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder : *Die Fremdlinge*.

## V.

### SAINT COLUMBAN AND THE PENITENTIAL DISCIPLINE.

A MAN of Columban's intense vitality could not limit his activity to the direction of a few hundred monks. Amidst the multifarious duties imposed on him by his office he found time to continue the work to which he had so energetically devoted himself on his arrival in Gaul—the reformation of the morals of the people by the application of the remedy of penance.

Just as the Pharisees and Sadducees, the publicans and soldiers came to John in the desert, and said to him: "Master, what shall we do?" so men came in great numbers to the abbot of Luxeuil to lay bare to him the wounds of their souls, and to ask him what they must do to escape the wrath to come.<sup>1</sup> Men of every degree and condition sought his guidance—bishops, priests, and clerics who had violated their vows of chastity or whose ordination was tainted with simony; monks who had proved unfaithful to their engagements, having returned to the world or retired into solitude against the will of their abbots; homicides, adulterers, and perjurers. What could he do to give these sin-burdened souls the peace they longed for? Should he tell them to submit to the public penitential discipline still obtaining in Gaul? But he knew quite well—it was one of the first things that had struck him when setting foot in the country<sup>2</sup>—that the penitential canons had practically become a dead letter in most parts of the Merovingian dominions; that few, if any, troubled themselves about them. His thoughts reverted to his native land. How wonderfully faith and piety had prospered under the penitential system in force there! Was it not quite natural that he should think of transplanting it into Gaul? But in what did the

<sup>1</sup> Col. Ep. ad Gregorium I.

<sup>2</sup> *Vit. Col.*, c. 5.

Celtic practice differ from that of the other Churches? In order to answer this question it will be necessary to review briefly the history of the penitential discipline in the primitive Church.<sup>3</sup>

The Power of the Keys, the power of loosing and binding, of forgiving and retaining sins, was vested in the Church by her Divine Founder. From the very beginning the Church claimed this power, and together with it the right to lay down the conditions for its valid and licit exercise by her ministers. These conditions have been modified in the course of the centuries, but there has been no essential change or innovation in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance itself. The Church has always taught, as she still teaches, that all mortal sins must be submitted to her binding and loosing power, and she has always demanded, as she still demands, confession as a prerequisite for their forgiveness.

During the first four centuries public confession and public penance were required for all mortal sins publicly committed or publicly known. The public confession was, however, preceded by a private declaration before the bishop, the penitentiary priest or the court sitting for that purpose. If the sin was a secret one, private confession sufficed,<sup>4</sup> but public penance was as a rule demanded. For sins of thought or desire confession, though not absolutely required, was very strongly recommended.<sup>5</sup>

After the Decian persecution the severity of the penitential discipline was relaxed in various parts of Christendom. In the East in the fourth century, confession to the penitentiary priest took the place of public confession,<sup>6</sup> and in the East as well as in the West a semi-public or even an entirely private procedure was admitted for mortal sins the commission of which had not been attended with any very grave scandal. In such cases the confession was made to the bishop or to a priest appointed by him, and a penance imposed. When the

<sup>3</sup> One of the best works on this subject in recent years is Gerhard Rauschen's *Eucharistie und Bussakrament in den ersten sechs Jahrhunderten der Kirche*, 2nd edit., Freiburg, 1910. It has also been translated into French, Italian, and English.

<sup>4</sup> Origen, *In Ps. 37*, Hom. 2, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cyprian, *De Lapsis*, 28; Pacian, *Paraenesis*, c. 5 (*Pat. Lat.*, 13, 1084).

<sup>6</sup> Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, VII, 16.

penance had been performed, absolution was given publicly or privately.<sup>7</sup>

In the fifth century private confession and private penance became still more general. In the East the last vestiges of the primitive system disappeared,<sup>8</sup> while in the West St. Leo the Great declared that private confession was sufficient in all cases, and limited public penance to the three capital sins properly so called, viz., murder, fornication and apostasy: whoever had merely taken part in heathen banquets or eaten food that had been offered to the gods could be cleansed of his sin by fasting and imposition of hands, that is by private penance and absolution.<sup>9</sup>

Sins which did not fall under the category of capital, or mortal, sins could be submitted to the Power of the Keys, and from a letter of Pope Innocent the First<sup>10</sup> we know that this was done in Rome in his time. If they were confessed, absolution was either not given at all, or only after the penance imposed, which meant a public penance during the first three centuries, had been performed.

Periodical confession, as prescribed for all Christians by the Lateran Council (1215), and confession before approaching the Holy Table, as generally practised by the faithful in our day, were unknown in the primitive Church. In the monasteries, however, as early as the fourth century frequent confession was not only recommended as a means of perfection but insisted upon as a duty.<sup>11</sup> The religious communities were only indirectly subject to episcopal jurisdiction: the religious confessed their sins, mortal and venial, to their superiors, and performed the penitential works imposed by them. Only if they themselves desired it, or if they were dismissed from the monastery, did their sins fall under episcopal jurisdiction.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Both kinds are mentioned in Can. 30 of the Synod of Hippo (a. 393). Except in case of necessity no priest could absolve a penitent without the consent of his bishop (Conc. Carthag., a. 397, Can. 30).

<sup>8</sup> The office of penitentiary priest was abolished in 391 by the Patriarch Nectarius (Sozomen, *H. E.*, VII, 16).

<sup>9</sup> Ep. 167, inquis. 19. See also Ep. 168: 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ep. 25: 7, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Cassian, *Coll.* II, 11, 6; *Instit.* IV, 9, 1; *Reg. S. Benedicti*, 4; Venantius Fortunatus *Carm.*, IV, 14; *Basil. Reg. Brev. Inter.*, 110, 183, 227, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Caes. Arelat. Hom.* VIII and XIII.

In Great Britain and Ireland, in the Celtic as well as in the Anglo-Saxon Church, public penance and public reconciliation were unknown,<sup>13</sup> probably because in these countries Christianity had been propagated mainly through the monasteries. Monasticism had set its seal on Ireland in the sixth century. The abbots exercised episcopal jurisdiction and treated the subjects of their quasi-dioceses much as their monks. They accustomed them to go to confession frequently;<sup>14</sup> to confess not only their mortal sins but their less grievous transgressions, too, and to receive a penance from the priest. The confessor was called by the beautiful name, *anmchara*, friend of the soul. "A man without an *anmchara*," Comgall of Bangor, the master of Columban, said, "is a body without a head."<sup>15</sup>

Such an *anmchara* was the Irish priest whom Bede speaks of in his Ecclesiastical History.<sup>16</sup> "There was in the monastery of Coludi<sup>17</sup> (about the year 680) a man of the Scottish race, called Adamnan,<sup>18</sup> leading a life entirely devoted to God in continence and prayer. . . . In his youth he had been guilty of some sin for which, when he came to himself, he conceived a great horror, and dreaded lest he should be punished for the same by the righteous Judge. Betaking himself, therefore, to a priest, who, he hoped, might show him the way of salvation, he confessed his guilt, and desired to be advised how he might escape the wrath to come. The priest having heard his offence, said, 'A great wound requires greater care in the healing thereof; wherefore give yourself as far as you are able to fasting and psalms, and prayer, to the end that thus coming before the Lord in confession, you may find Him merciful.' But he, being oppressed with great grief by reason of his guilty conscience, and desiring to be the sooner loosed from the inward fetters of sin, which lay heavy upon him, answered, 'I am still young in years and strong of body, and

<sup>13</sup> Poenitentiale Theodori, I, 13, § 4. "In hac provincia (Brittannica) reconciliatio non est, eo quod publica poenitentia non est."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Vita Ciarani*, 15; Alcuin, Ep. 225. (*Pat. Lat.*, 100, 502.)

<sup>15</sup> H. D'Arbois in *Rev. Celtique*, XXIV (1903), p. 107.

<sup>16</sup> IV, 25. (Ed. A. M. Sellar, p. 281 f.)

<sup>17</sup> Coldingham in Berwickshire.

<sup>18</sup> Different from Adamnan, Abbot of Iona, who wrote the life of St. Columba.

shall, therefore, easily bear all whatsoever you shall enjoin me to do, even though you should bid me spend the whole night standing in prayer, and pass the whole week in abstinence.' The priest replied, 'It is much for you to continue for a whole week without bodily sustenance; it is enough to observe a fast for two or three days; do this till I come again to you in a short time, when I will more fully show you what you ought to do, and how long to persevere in your penance.' "

The frequency of confession naturally led to the regulation of the penitential discipline. There were no handbooks of Moral Theology in those days, and yet the judges of the court of conscience had to have some norm to go by; abuses had to be prevented and uniformity of practice had to be secured. Thus arose the *Penance Books*, or *Penitentials*, which contained precise directions in regard to the penances to be imposed for the various offences.

The oldest Irish penitential is that ascribed to St. Finnian of Magh-Bile, or Moville, the patron of the Counties Down and Antrim, who died in the year 588 or 589. It begins with the words: "If anyone sins in his heart by a thought and forthwith repents of it, let him strike his breast, ask God for forgiveness and make satisfaction to the end that he may be restored to health again. But if the penitent combined with the thought the will to carry it out, if he, for example, intended to commit murder or a sin of impurity, but could not carry out his purpose, 'he has already sinned in his heart,' but he can be saved by prompt repentance. He shall fast for half a year, and for a whole year abstain from wine and flesh-meat." The penances are all proportioned in rigor and duration to the gravity of the faults committed, sins of priests and clerics being visited with heavier penalties than those of laymen.

Such was the penitential system under which Columban had grown up. He was acquainted with the penitential writings of Gildas and Finnian. Finnian he must have known personally, for Magh-Bile was only a short distance from Bangor, and Finnian was a friend of Comgall. It would have been strange indeed if he had not attempted to introduce into the land of his adoption the practices sanctioned by men whom

he held in such high esteem. A man who clung so tenaciously to Celtic traditions in other matters, such as the tonsure, the manner of celebrating Mass and the divine office, and the date of Easter, would surely not be inclined to set aside these traditions when there was question of the treatment of penitents.

But Columban was a reformer in the true sense of the word, not an innovator. It was not his purpose to abolish the existing penitential system, but to supplement it. Far from attempting to undermine the authority of the Frankish bishops and their clergy, he worked hand in hand with them. Above all, he did not set about his work of reform in a headlong, foolhardy manner. At first he contented himself with preaching the Gospel to the people and drawing them to the practice of penance by his own example and that of his followers. When he effected conversions, he sent the penitents to their bishops or priests to confess their sins and to be reconciled to God.<sup>19</sup> When their guilty consciences impelled bishops and monks to make him their confidant, he did not trust to his own lights to solve their difficulties, but first consulted the Father of Christendom. He had made up his mind to go to Rome in person to discuss these and other questions with Gregory I, who occupied the chair of St. Peter at that time; but ill health and the cares of his office preventing him from carrying out his ardent desire, he proposed his difficulties to the Pope in a letter which has fortunately been preserved to us. The portion that concerns us here runs as follows:

"What is your opinion of such bishops as have been consecrated contrary to the canons, that is in consequence of bribery—Gildas calls them simoniacal pests?<sup>20</sup> Can we hold intercourse with them? I ask the question because many are known to be such in this province. Furthermore, what about those who, while deacons, were unfaithful to their vow of chastity, having returned to the wives they had left when entering orders, and were afterwards elected bishops? A number of these as well as some simonistic bishops have unburthened their consciences to us, and wish to know whether

<sup>19</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gildas, *Increpatio in sacerdotes*, which is the second part of the *Epistola Gildae*. (Seebass in *Z. f. Kirchengeschichte*, XIII, p. 529.)



they can retain their office without peril to their souls. Finally, tell me, I beseech you, what is to be done with monks who, inflamed with the desire for a more perfect life, leave their monasteries against the will of their abbots and retire into solitude? Vennianus (Finnian) put the same question to Gildas<sup>21</sup> and received a beautifully worded answer from him, which does not, however, altogether satisfy me.”<sup>22</sup>

It was only after he had received Gregory's answer to these queries<sup>23</sup> that Columban set to work to adapt the penitential canons of Gildas, Finnian and the other Celtic doctors<sup>24</sup> to the special needs of the clergy and people of Gaul.

The primitive text of Columban's Penitential has not come down to us. The text first published by Fleming from three Bobbio manuscripts shows evident signs of having been repeatedly tampered with. Besides some glaring errors of transcription, it contains several unnecessary and even contradictory repetitions. Passages from Columban's Cenobitical Rule have crept into it, and passages from some monastic rule or other that are altogether out of place in a Penitential. Still the authenticity of the main part of the work can hardly be called in question.<sup>25</sup>

The sins against which the abbot of Luxeuil directed his penitential canons are met with in all times and climes, but they appear to have been especially common among certain classes in the sixth and seventh centuries: Homicide, bloodshed, perjury, theft, excess in eating and drinking, impurity, witchcraft; in fact, the whole catalogue of sins of which St. Paul says that “they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Altera Epistola of Gildas*, written in Ireland between 565 and 570. Gildas died about 570.

<sup>22</sup> Col. Epist. ad Greg. M.

<sup>23</sup> Vit. Sadalbergae, 3. The author of this *Vita* says that he had been privileged to read Pope Gregory's answer to Columban's letter “de pervigili pas-torum cura.” It seems quite probable that Gregory also replied to Columban's other queries also.

<sup>24</sup> If we compare Columban's Penitential with that of Finnian and Gildas, we see that Columban followed on the whole the traditions of the Celtic Church. For the text of these and numerous other Penitentials see Wasserschleben, *Die Bussordnungen der abendländischen Kirche*, or Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisziplin der Kirche* (Mainz, 1883).

<sup>25</sup> See Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, I, 4th edit., p. 275 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Gal. 5:19; I Cor. 6:9.

The penalties are extremely rigorous when measured by our present standards; but we must remember that Columban had to deal with rude, carnal-minded men, men with violent passions, who were ready, on the slightest provocation, to draw the sword and cut down an enemy; whose consciences were anything but tender in questions of mine and thine, and whose highest pleasures were those of the table. The sanctions had to be such as were calculated not only to terrify the penitent by their severity but also to strike at the root of his sins. This was the purpose of the long fasts on bread and water, of the abstinence from flesh-meat and wine, of the injunction to leave home and kindred, to retire into a monastery, or to stand among the catechumens in the church.

To teach the warlike Franks the value of human life, a homicide had to go unarmed into exile<sup>27</sup> for three years, and after his return to work for the parents of his victim and in all things supply the place of a son in their household. Whoever had injured or disabled another was bound to care for his victim, to procure medical aid for him and to supply all his wants till his recovery: a fast of forty days brought his penance to a close.

Being punishments, the penances were proportioned to the gravity of the sins.<sup>28</sup> Thus a sinful thought or desire was less severely punished than a sinful action; a single sin, than repeated transgressions. The motive of the sin was also taken into consideration. A person who had perjured himself for gain had to sell all his possessions and spend the rest of his days in a monastery; but if he had sworn falsely from fear of death, he was sent into banishment for three years and in addition to sundry periods of fasting and abstinence from meat and wine had to free a serf or slave from bondage.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For exile as a punishment for homicide see Adamnan, *Vita S. Columbae*, I, 22, and II, 39.

<sup>28</sup> *Poenitent. Columbani*, I.

<sup>29</sup> The manumission of slaves was effected in various ways: (a) Enfranchisement *per denarium*. "When a master was prepared to liberate his slave, he took him before the count of his district to whom he announced his intention. Thereupon the slave produced a coin, and offered it to his master as a sign that he wished to purchase his freedom. The master, not receiving the denarius, but striking it from the hand of his slave, signified that he was willing to complete the contract, and at the same time to forgo the price. A *carta denarialis* was then drawn up by order of the count, and delivered to

The penalties varied too according to the status of the culprit. For sorcery a priest was subjected to a three years' fast on bread and water, a deacon to two, a simple cleric to one year and a layman to six months. For drunkenness a cleric had to fast for forty days; a layman for seven days. For stealing an ox, a horse, or a sheep a cleric was punished with a year's fast on bread and water; a layman with three quarantines; if the offence was repeated, and restitution was impossible, the fast in the case of the cleric was prolonged to three years.

Two of Columban's canons were drawn up to meet special conditions prevailing in the immediate neighborhood of Luxeuil. At the beginning of the seventh century the Warasci, who occupied portions of the territory of the ancient Sequani,<sup>30</sup> were still either addicted to idolatrous practices or infected with the heresy of Photinus and Bonosus. This was a constant occasion of sin for the Catholics of those parts. The pagan banquets especially attracted many lukewarm Christians, for whom the step from being idle spectators to partaking of the food offered to the false gods was but a short one. Some were even guilty of formal acts of idolatry. As gluttony was the principal source of these sins Columban thought that fasting and abstinence would be the best cure for them. "Whoever shall have partaken of food or drink near the temples of the false gods," he says, "if he did so merely for the sake of the good cheer, shall promise never to do so again, and fast forty days on bread and water. If he did not restrain his gluttony even after he had been warned by his parish priest that he was committing a sacrilege, he shall fast three times forty days. But if his act was one of formal demon or image worship, he shall fast for three years."

The Bonosian or Photinian heresy—in the south of Gaul and in Burgundy the followers of Bonosus<sup>31</sup> had amalgamated

the former slaves as evidence of his emancipation"; (b) *Enfranchisement per handtradam*. The slave was surrounded by a ring of twelve persons, one of whom was his master. The master took the slave and passed him outside the circle. (c) *Enfranchisement* by the master's last will and testament "for the remission of his sins and the salvation of his soul." (See the *Formulas of Marculf*, a Frank monk of the 7th cent. in *Migne, Pat. Lat.*, t. 87.)

<sup>30</sup> See *Vita Sadalbergae*, 7; *Vita Col.*, II, 8.

<sup>31</sup> Bonosus, bishop of Sardica, died at the beginning of the fifth century. Condemned as a heretic by Council of Capua (371). St. Ambrose exhorted

with those of Photinus <sup>32</sup>—was in some respects even more dangerous to the faith of the Catholics than paganism. Not content with denying the perpetual virginity of Mary, as their founder had done, the later Bonosians denied her divine motherhood also, and, in consequence, the divinity of Christ. To prevent the poison of these doctrines from spreading amongst the faithful, Columban visited communication with those who held them with severe penalties:

“Whoever shall have held intercourse with the Bonosians or with other heretics, shall stand among the catechumens for forty days, and another forty days among the public penitents. But if he continued to communicate with them after the priest had warned him, he shall fast for a year and three quarantines, and abstain from the use of wine and flesh-meat for two years more: only then shall he be reconciled by the imposition of the hands of a Catholic bishop.”

The profound wisdom underlying these penitential ordinances gained favor for them with the ecclesiastical authorities. The bishops who had chosen Columban for their spiritual guide were no doubt the first to introduce his Penitential into their dioceses. Later on, when many of the episcopal sees were occupied by men who had received their training in Luxeuil, the new system made greater headway still. The successors of Columban followed in the footsteps of their master. Besides bringing many to the practice of penance himself, St. Eustace sent out zealous monks to preach and hear confessions in the towns and villages of Austrasia.<sup>33</sup> Some of these missionaries penetrated even to the palace of the king in Metz, and their preaching is said to have made a deep impression on the dissolute courtiers of Chlothar III.<sup>34</sup> At this time we also meet with the title “father confessor,” and it is significant that it is a pupil of Luxeuil who is the first to bear it.<sup>35</sup>

him to submit. He founded the sect named after him, which counted numerous followers till far into the seventh century. It was spread especially in southern Gaul, Burgundy (Synod of Clichy, 626), and Spain (Synod of Toledo, 675). The Bonosians were sometimes called “Antidikomarianites”.

<sup>32</sup> Photinus, bishop of Sirmium in Pannonia. Denied the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. Condemned by Council of Sirmium (351). Died in exile about 366.

<sup>33</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 8; *Vit. Amati*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Vita Bertini*, 3.

When the Frankish bishops saw the good fruits produced everywhere by the new penitential system, they did not hesitate to give it their formal approbation. The Synod of Chalon-sur-Saône (circ. 650), after declaring penance to be a means of salvation for the soul and useful for all men, adds that "the entire episcopacy is agreed that after confession a penance should be imposed on the penitents by the priests."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Vit. Bertini*, 11. St. Bertin Abbot of Sithiu, was "pater confessionum" to Count Walbert and his wife Regentrude.

<sup>36</sup> Can. 8 (M. G. Conc., I, 210).

## VI.

### ST. COLUMBAN IN SOLITUDE.

GREAT souls have ever been irresistibly drawn to solitude. Was it not among the lonely hills that God always manifested Himself most intimately to men? And is not the rocky wilderness "haunted by the memories of prophets, the presences of angels, and the everlasting thoughts and words of the Redeemer"? "The wilderness", says St. Eucherius of Lyons, "is the boundless temple of God. . . . It is the seat of faith, the shield of virtue, the sanctuary of love, the well-guarded ark of godliness and righteousness. Where can man better taste how sweet the Lord is? Where is the road of progress in virtue better prepared; where is the spirit purer, freer to attach itself to God and to raise itself to the contemplation of the eternal mysteries?"<sup>1</sup>

There is in stillness oft a magic power  
To calm the breast, when struggling passions lower;  
Touched by its influence, in the soul arise  
Diviner feelings, kindred with the skies.  
For this the hermit seeks the thickest grove,  
To catch th' inspiring glow of heavenly love.<sup>2</sup>

In solitude, in heart-to-heart communion with God, shrinking natures have been trained to fight boldly the battles of the Lord. It was in solitude, too, that Columban gathered the strength and courage necessary to face the trials which he knew were to be his portion.

A satchel with the book of the Scriptures slung from his shoulder, he would plunge into the trackless depths of the forests about Annegray and Luxeuil, and give himself up to study and mortification and prayer. Between him and the

<sup>1</sup> S. Eucherius ad S. Hilarium Arel. Ep. *De Laude Eremit.*

<sup>2</sup> Newman, *Verses on Various Occasions*: "Solitude."

beasts and the birds of the forest there was mutual peace: he looked upon them and treated them as his dear friends, and they obeyed him as they had obeyed our first parents in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. "And why should we be astonished," to use the words of the Venerable Bede,<sup>3</sup> "that he who himself faithfully and sincerely obeys the Creator of all things, should find even the brute creation obedient to his commands?" It is but the fulfilment of the promise made to the just man fifteen hundred years before the coming of Christ: "The beasts of the earth shall be at peace with thee";<sup>4</sup> and of the prophecy of Osee: "In that day I will make a covenant with them, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the air, and with the creeping things of the earth."<sup>5</sup>

On one of his solitary walks he was revolving in his mind the question, whether it were better to fall into the hands of wicked men or to be at the mercy of some wild beast. He had just decided in favor of the second alternative, because a wild beast, no matter how cruelly it may treat its victim, acts according to its nature and therefore does not offend God, when all of a sudden he saw himself surrounded by a pack of hungry wolves. He stood still and made the sign of the cross upon himself, saying: "O God, come to my assistance; O Lord, make haste to help me". The wolves drew nearer, sniffed at his tunic, and then retreated into the woods as suddenly as they had come. Continuing on his way, he heard the voices of the wild Suevi who were ranging through the forest in search of adventure. But they did not see him, and he escaped this danger too.<sup>6</sup>

A bear was preparing to devour a stag which had been run down and killed by some wolves near Fredemungiaca. Columban surprised him in the act and told him to have a care not to spoil a skin which he sorely needed to make shoes for his monks. "And the beast," says Jonas, "forgetting his native ferocity, hung his head and went back into the forest."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Vit. Cuthberti*, C. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Osee* 2: 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Job* 5: 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Vit. Col.*, 8.

Returning from the fields one afternoon, Columban laid on a stone at the entrance of the refectory the gloves<sup>8</sup> which he always wore when doing manual labor. When the repast was over and all were ready to resume work, one of the gloves was missing. After a vain search had been made, Columban said that the bold robber could be no other but the bird that Noe sent forth from the ark and that did not return; and he added that he would not feed its young any more unless the stolen property were immediately restored. He had scarcely spoken these words, when, to the great astonishment of the brothers, a raven alighted in their midst, deposited the missing glove on the stone from which he had taken it, and meekly waited until the abbot told him to fly away.

On one of his rambles through the forest, he climbed with great difficulty through brambles and thorns to the top of a high rocky plateau. But even this apparently inaccessible region was not without its inhabitant. A bear had taken up his abode in a large cave in the side of a precipitous rock. The wildness of the place pleased Columban and he commanded the beast to retire and not haunt those parts in future.<sup>9</sup>

This cave, which was about seven Roman miles from Annegray,<sup>10</sup> became his favorite hermitage. Regularly every Sunday he spent some hours there in contemplation, and at the approach of the great festivals he retired thither for weeks at a time. The sentiments that filled his heart on these occasions are beautifully expressed in his favorite prayer, "Domine Deus, destrue quicquid plantat in me adversarius et eradica," which a happy chance has preserved for us: "O Lord God, eradicate, extirpate from my soul whatever the adversary has planted therein; take away from my heart and from my lips all iniquity; enlighten my mind and strengthen my will that I may serve Thee alone in deed and in truth.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 15: "Tegumenta manuum, quos Galli *wantos* vocant." (Wantos—Modern French *Gants*).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>10</sup> The *Hermitage of St. Columban* is still pointed out to the tourist, about a mile northeast of the present village of Annegray. The spring at the foot of the rock is looked upon as miraculous. (Martin, *S. Colomban.*, p. 38.)



Give me, O Lord, memory, charity, chastity, faith; give me whatever Thou knowest to be profitable to my soul." <sup>11</sup>

During these days of retreat, the little recreation he allowed himself was taken in the company of the inhabitants of the forest. At his call the birds would light on his shoulder and eat out of his hand; the fawns would come to be caressed by him, and the squirrels would run down from the trees and nestle in the folds of his gown. <sup>12</sup>

This love of nature and of all living things might surprise us in a man of Columban's temper, did we not know that it was conspicuous in the Celtic saints generally. The old Lives abound with references to their sympathy with and affection for birds. A crane followed St. Columkille about everywhere like a dog while he was at home in Iona. <sup>13</sup> St. Brendan of Clonfert had a pet crow. St. Colman of Templeshanbo in Wexford kept a flock of ducks on a pond near the church, which were so tame that they came and went at his call. St. Patrick himself set his people a good example of tenderness for animals. When the chief Dare gave the Saint a piece of ground at Armagh, they both went to look at it: and on their arrival they found there a doe with its little fawn. Some of St. Patrick's people made toward it to kill it: but he prevented them; and taking up the little animal gently on his shoulder, he brought it and laid it down in another field some distance to the north of Armagh, the mother following him all the way like a pet sheep.

And how intensely appreciative of natural beauty the ancient Irish were! Standing on the great rath of Cnoc-Raffan, Comgan breaks out into the following lines:

<sup>11</sup> The *Oratio S. Columbani* is inscribed on folio 9 of the Gospel Book called after St. Columban in the Library of Turin. (Cod. G. V. 2.)

<sup>12</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 17.

<sup>13</sup> See also the charming incident of "the stranger guest, the crane, from the northern region of Ireland" hospitably entertained on his landing "very weary and fatigued" on the Isle of Iona, in Adamnan's *Vit. S. Columb.* I, 48. There are also stories about cranes in the lives of St. Finian and St. Ailbhe, and the account of St. Brendan's voyage is full of marvels concerning birds. The story of the white horse that "whinnied and shed copious tears" when his master St. Columkille, was about to leave him forever, is too well-known to need more than a passing reference. (*Adamnan*, II, 33.)

This great rath on which I stand,  
Wherein is a little well with a bright silver drinking-cup :  
Sweet was the voice of the wood of blackbirds  
Round this rath of Fiacha, son of Moinche.

Even dry grammatical rules must have been easy to learn when illustrated by such charming examples as the following, given in a treatise on Prosody in the Book of Ballymote :

The bird that calls within the willow-tree,  
Beautiful his beak and clear his voice ;  
The tip of the bill of the glossy jet-black bird is a lovely yellow ;  
The note that the merle warbles is a trilling lay.<sup>14</sup>

But to return to Columban in his solitude. During his longer periods of retirement he was generally attended by the boy Domoal, who ministered to his meagre wants, gathering the herbs and wild apples<sup>15</sup> that were his ordinary food, and fetching his drink from some mountain streamlet. One day, when the lad complained that he had to run so far for water, he told him to dig behind a near-by rock. He did so, and, aided by the prayers of his master, soon struck a spring of the purest water; it flows to this day, and is called the Spring of St. Columban. Sometimes he would select as his companion some brother or other who needed special spiritual direction, having more than ordinary temptations to fight against, or his vocation being undecided. A certain brother, Autiernus by name, was seized with a great longing to spend the rest of his days in Ireland. "Let us go into the wilderness," Columban said to him; "there we shall learn whether it is the will of God that you should go on this pilgrimage, or remain in the company of the brothers." So they went together into a secluded forest retreat, where they spent twelve days in prayer and rigorous fasting; we are not told, however, what decision they arrived at.<sup>16</sup>

When neither herbs nor wild apples were in season and their scanty supply of bread failed, Columban would tell his

<sup>14</sup> Joyce, *A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, pp. 522 ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 10: "Poma parvula, quae etiam *bullugas* vulgo, appellant." In C. 27 they are called "*ruris poma*."

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* C. 11.

companions to try for fish in one of the many rivulets with which the countryside was blessed; and they always returned abundantly supplied. One day he sent Gall to fish in the Breuchin. But Gall, who had a reputation as a clever fisherman, thinking that l'Ognon would prove a more likely place, took his little wicker-work coracle there instead, and cast out his net. Fish were in abundance—he saw them swimming about in shoals—but they kept clear of his net, and, though he labored hard all the day, he caught nothing. On his return, Columban upbraided him severely for his disobedience, and sent him back once more to fish in the Breuchin. This time Gall followed out his master's directions to the letter and was rewarded by a splendid draught. St. Gall himself related this incident to his master's biographer.<sup>17</sup>

Prolonged fasts and vigils leave their marks on the strongest constitution: Columban was so emaciated, says his biographer, that he scarcely seemed to be alive.<sup>18</sup> He continued nevertheless to chastise his body and to bring it into subjection, following the Apostle's rule of dying daily, and remembering the Apostle's words: "When I am weak, then am I powerful". Besides, Satan still had a strong hold on the peoples among whom he labored, and he was determined to do his share toward dispossessing him by fasting and prayer.

<sup>17</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

## VII.

### COLUMBAN AND THE EASTER CONTROVERSY.

**A**LTHOUGH the bishops of Gaul approved Columban's preaching and gradually adopted his penitential discipline, they were by no means satisfied with all he did. Many of his actions, it must be admitted, were indeed calculated to call forth opposition. He had established his monastic colonies in the diocese of Besançon without troubling himself in the least about the authorization of the Ordinary, an authorization required by the law, civil and ecclesiastical, of the land.<sup>1</sup> When the church of St. Peter at Luxeuil was finished, he invited an Irish bishop to perform the sacred ceremony.<sup>2</sup> He clung tenaciously to certain peculiarities of his ancestral Church,<sup>3</sup> such as the form of the tonsure, the liturgy of the Mass, and the date of celebrating Easter. He appears in fact to have regarded his foundations as wholly exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, and himself as invested with the same authority as that enjoyed by the abbots of Bangor and Iona.

For a long time apparently Columban was left undisturbed. The bishops knew that he stood in high favor with the court, and that he counted many of the Burgundian nobles among his intimates. The people were enthusiastic in their admiration of his heroic virtues, and his miraculous and prophetic gifts inspired respect mingled with awe. It is quite possible that he would have been left unmolested indefinitely, if he had not himself through his imprudence precipitated the conflict. The dispute turned on the question of the proper time of celebrating Easter.

As Easter is the pivotal feast of the liturgical year, on which the whole cycle of the movable feasts depends, it was always

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Conc. Agath. (Agde), A. 506, Can. 27; Conc. Epaon., A. 517, Can. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Col. Epist., 4 *Ad Frat. Luxov.*

<sup>3</sup> An ancient manuscript in the monastery of St. Gall calls Columban, "traditionum Scoticarum tenacissimus consector".

considered of the highest importance that there should be uniformity in regard to the date of its celebration. And yet from the very beginning Christendom seems to have been divided on this question of liturgical chronology.<sup>4</sup> The Christians of Asia Minor commemorated the Passion and Death of Our Lord on the fourteenth of the month Nisan, the first month of the Jewish religious year; at three o'clock in the afternoon of this day they brought their Lenten fast to a close, and celebrated the Feast of the Resurrection two days after, without regard to the day of the week. Those who held this view were called *Quartodecimans*.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the rest of the Church Easter was kept on the Sunday after the Jewish Passover, the anniversary of the Death of Christ being commemorated on the previous Friday, whether it fell on the fourteenth of Nisan or not. Long, and at times violent, controversies ensued. In 162 St. Polycarp visited Rome to confer with Pope St. Anicetus on this question, but no agreement was reached. Pope St. Victor (193-203), wishing to break the obstinacy of the Christians of Asia Minor, threatened them with excommunication if they refused to conform to the general practice. A schism was averted by the intervention of St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons.

About the middle of the third century both the East and the West abandoned the Jewish computation and calculated the date of Easter according to cycles. In Rome and the West a cycle of eighty-four years was used,<sup>6</sup> Easter falling between 25 March and 21 April, or the fourteenth and twentieth moon; in Alexandria and the East the Metonic cycle<sup>7</sup> of nineteen years was adopted, Easter being kept between 22 March and 25 April, or the fifteenth and twenty-first moon. Both cycles adhered to the rule of observing Easter on the Sunday after

<sup>4</sup> On the Easter question see: Bede, *Hist. Ecc.* (passim)—B. Krusch, *Studien zur christ.-mittelalt. Chronologie*. The same, *Die Einführung des griechischen Paschalritus im Abendlande* (Neues Archiv IX)—Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis* (passim).

<sup>5</sup> Luna *quartadecima* = 14th moon.

<sup>6</sup> Called the Cycle of Augustalis.

<sup>7</sup> Called after Meton, an Athenian astronomer of 5th cent. B. C., who introduced the cycle of nineteen years, after the lapse of which the new and the full moon returns to the same day of the year. The Metonic Cycle did not till long after supplant the older Oктаeteris.

the spring full moon, that is, in the third week of the first month, or month in which the full moon occurred on or after the vernal equinox.<sup>8</sup>

The Council of Arles (314), at which several British bishops were present, decreed that Easter should be celebrated on one and the same day throughout the world;<sup>9</sup> but this prescription remained a dead letter. Another attempt to bring about an agreement between the East and the West was made at the Council of Nice (325). The assembled Fathers declared that Easter should be observed on the same Sunday by all Christians, but never on the same day as the Jews. They furthermore decreed, against the Protapaschites,<sup>10</sup> that Easter should always be kept after the vernal equinox, but the date of the equinox was left undetermined, and no canon was set up by which the date of the Paschal Solemnity could be ascertained. It seems, however, that the bishop of Alexandria was orally commissioned to compute the Paschal term and to communicate the results of his calculations to the Pope, who was to announce the date of the next Easter celebration to the more distant parts of the world.<sup>11</sup> But as Rome and the West were unwilling to give up their cycle of eighty-four years, complete uniformity was not attained.

In 343 Rome changed its cycle in such a way that Easter fell between 22 March and 21 April, or the 16th and 22nd of the moon.<sup>12</sup> In 457 the learned Victorius of Aquitaine made another attempt to reconcile the Roman and Alexandrian computations by introducing a cycle based on a period of 532 years (obtained by multiplying the solar cycle of twenty-eight years by the Metonic, or Alexandrian lunar cycle of nine-

<sup>8</sup> The date of the full moon fourteen days after the calendar new moon of the vernal equinox is called the Paschal term; the new moon of the vernal equinox is called the Paschal moon.

<sup>9</sup> Mansi, Concil., II, 471.

<sup>10</sup> Those who kept Easter before the vernal equinox; after the destruction of Jerusalem the Jews often observed their Passover before the spring equinox, in which practice they were followed by the judaizing Christians of Palestine.

<sup>11</sup> See Bede, *H. E.*, V. 21.

<sup>12</sup> The object of not keeping Easter before the 16th moon seems to have been to make it possible for Good Friday to fall on the 14th of Nisan, which was generally believed to be the actual day of the Crucifixion, and to keep Easter Day entirely clear of the Jewish Festival.

teen years), according to which the date of Easter varied between 22 March and 24 April, or the 16th and 22nd of the moon.<sup>13</sup> Although the Victorian table respected the Latin custom of keeping Easter between the sixteenth and twenty-second day of the lunar month, and was favored besides by high dignitaries of the Papal court—Victorius is supposed to have drawn it up at the instance of the Roman archdeacon Hilary, the successor of Leo the Great in the Apostolic See—it was not adopted in Italy. The sorely needed uniformity between the East and the West was not brought about until, in 525, Dionysius Exiguus revived the cycle of Victorius and drew up a continuation of the Paschal computation of St. Cyril of Alexandria. The Dionysian canon fixes the equinox at the 21st of March and Easter Day on a Sunday between the 15th and 21st of the lunar month, or the 22nd of March and the 25th of April. It was this computation that St. Augustine introduced into England in 597, and which was so violently opposed by the Celts of Great Britain and Ireland.

It is generally assumed that, in the sixth century, the island Celts followed the cycle of eighty-four years in use in Rome previous to the year 343.<sup>14</sup> However that may be, it is certain that the Celtic churches differed from the rest of Christendom in fixing the vernal equinox at the 25th of March instead of the 21st of March, and in reckoning the third week of the first month, that is, the month in which the full moon occurred on or after the vernal equinox, holding it to be from the 14th to the 20th of the moon inclusive.<sup>15</sup> Hence, according to the Celtic rule, Easter Day could never fall later than the 21st of April, and coincided with the Jewish Passover whenever the 14th of the moon fell on a Sunday. As they observed the Feast on Sunday, they were not rightly called Quartodecimans, though often confounded with them. This

<sup>13</sup> The Victorian period is a period of 532 Julian years, after which the moon's changes recur on the same days of the week and the month. In his Paschal Table Victorius also noted the years in which the Alexandrians differed from him; this happened each time the 15th moon fell on a Sunday; the Alexandrians kept Easter on this Sunday; the Latins postponed it till the following Sunday, for the reason stated above.

<sup>14</sup> See Bede, *H. E.*, II, 2; III, 25; V, 21. Cf. Cumman, *Epistola de Controversia Paschali* (*Pat. Lat.*, t. 87, p. 975).

<sup>15</sup> Bede, l. c.

custom of celebrating Easter had taken such deep root in the traditions of the Celts that, for a long time, all efforts to induce them to abandon it were futile. They firmly believed that their canon had the sanction of the holy and learned Anatolius, Bishop of Laodicea (d. 276), whose work on the Paschal rite had been quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea and extolled by St. Jerome; they were not aware that the work they made so much of was not the genuine work of Anatolius but the production of a sixth-century Scot or Briton.

Some decades before Columban's arrival on the Continent, the Frankish bishops had brought about uniformity in regard to the observance of Easter by decreeing, at the Fourth Synod of Orleans (541), that the Computation of Victorius, which was practically identical with that of Dionysius, should be adopted by all the Churches of Gaul. For the sake of peace, if for no other reason, Columban should have conformed to the liturgical usages of the land which he had chosen for his second home. But he loved what he considered to be the truth more than peace, and continued to celebrate Easter according to the custom of the Irish Church. After some time he even took the offensive, inveighed against the Victorian cycle and made open propaganda for the supposed canon of Anatolius.

Matters came to a crisis in the year 600, when Columban kept Easter in his monasteries on the third of April, the 18th moon according to the Celtic computation, but the 14th moon, and consequently the day of the Jewish Passover, according to the Victorian cycle; whilst in the rest of Gaul the Feast was observed on the tenth of April, or the 21st moon. The bishops were scandalized. In their eyes Columban was nothing less than a Quartodeciman, and they resolved to take immediate action. They did not take him to task for celebrating Easter eight days before them, but "because it was not allowed to celebrate Easter with the Jews".<sup>16</sup> Columban considered this reason frivolous, and wrote a treatise in support of the Celtic practice. Before submitting his work to the bishops, he had recourse to Candidus, the administrator of the Patrimony of the Holy See in Gaul. He was evidently sanguine of ob-

<sup>16</sup> This decision of the Gallic bishops is quoted by Columban in his letter to Pope St. Gregory the Great. See below.



taining his countenance and of being able in this way to overcome the opposition of the bishops. But Candidus refused to enter into the controversy, simply declaring any change in the practice obtaining in Gaul to be inadmissible. Thereupon Columban appealed to Pope Gregory.

After a rather pompous salutation, in which he calls the Holy Father "the most beautiful ornament of the Roman Church, the most august flower of all languishing Europe, the eminent watchman, the master of divine doctrine", and some introductory words of excuse for presuming to write to him, he enters immediately on the discussion of the Easter question.

"What is your opinion," he asks, "of an Easter celebrated on the 21st or 22nd moon, which many calculators have shown to be a dark Easter? For I believe it cannot be unknown to your Holiness how disparagingly Anatolius, whom Jerome<sup>17</sup> calls a man of wondrous learning", and whom Eusebius of Caesarea quotes in his Ecclesiastical History,<sup>18</sup> speaks of this age of the moon".<sup>19</sup>

It was unchristian, Columban argues, to keep Easter later than the 20th day after the new moon, because according to Holy Scripture,<sup>20</sup> the Feast of the Passover should be observed only between the 14th and 20th day after the new moon; it was a crime to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord at a time when darkness was more powerful than light, for after the 20th of the lunar month the moon does not rise till after midnight; it was absurd to celebrate Easter on the 23rd or 24th of March, for, as the vernal equinox falls on 25 March and Christ died after this equinox, that would be to commemorate the Resurrection before the Passion.

"Why then," he continues, "do you, who are so wise, whose intelligence irradiates the universe, tolerate a dark Easter? I am astonished, I confess, that this error of the Gauls, an error that is all but schismatical, has not long since been corrected by you, unless perchance I am to think—a thing I can

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Hieronymus, *Lib. de Vir. Inlustr.*, c. 73.

<sup>18</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Ecc.*, VII, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Krusch published the Canon of the Pseudo-Anatolius in his *Studien z. chr. mittelalt. Chron.*, 319 f.

<sup>20</sup> Exod. 12: 15.

scarcely believe—that, as it has evidently not been set right by you, it has your approval. You will perhaps take refuge behind the authority of your predecessors, especially of St. Leo.<sup>21</sup> But in such a question the humility which hides behind the opinion of those who are dead is exposed to be deceived. In the present case ‘a living dog is better than a dead lion’;<sup>22</sup> for a living saint can correct the errors left uncorrected by one who is long since dead. You must know that Victorius was rejected by our doctors and the wisest of our Irish calculators and philosophers; he was at most thought worthy of a smile of indulgence. Therefore, I beseech you, give the support of your decision to me who am a timid man, a pilgrim rather than a scholar, and lay the storm that is raging around us; for, after the many authors whom I have consulted, I cannot agree with the maxim of these bishops, that ‘Easter must not be celebrated with the Jews’. Pope Victor said this too, but none of the Orientals were of his opinion. . . .”<sup>23</sup>

Carried away by the sentiment of the justice of his cause, Columban forgets the character of his correspondent, whom a moment before he had styled “the legitimate occupant of the Chair of St. Peter, the Apostle and Key-Bearer”. In his anxiety to prevent an unfavorable verdict he does not hesitate to glance at the remote possibility of a schism of the Celtic Church.

“Excuse or condemn your Victorius,” he tells Gregory; “but know that, if you uphold him, you are in contradiction with Jerome: you must choose between them. In deciding the question at issue between Victorius and Anatolius, take care not to have the great doctor against you: perhaps, on this point, we should hesitate between you and him. Spare our feebleness this temptation of disagreeing with you; for in all simplicity I declare to you that if anyone, no matter who he be, opposes the authority of St. Jerome, he runs the risk of seeing himself repudiated as a heretic by the Churches of the West.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> It was under St. Leo the Great (440-461) that the Victorian Canon was introduced into Gaul.

<sup>22</sup> Eccles. 9:4: *Leo* = *Leo* and *lion*.

<sup>23</sup> A rather violent exaggeration: only one synod, that of Ephesus under Polykrates, declared in favor of the Quartodecimans.

<sup>24</sup> That is, by the Churches of the British Isles, which Columban always calls “the West”.

After proposing the three cases of conscience to which we have referred above, Columban continues :

Did bodily infirmity not prevent me, I should hasten to Rome in person, being most desirous of seeing you, and of drinking of that spiritual fountain of living water flowing down from Heaven and springing up into life everlasting. Could the body follow the spirit, Rome would experience the same contempt as in the days when, as the learned Jerome relates, certain pilgrims came to her from the confines of Spain, but not for her sake, not for the sake of her ancient glories, her temples and her palaces ; so should I now go to Rome, not because I long to see Rome, but because I long to see you and to pay homage to the ashes of the Saints.

I read your book on the *Pastoral Office* ; it is concise in style, but rich in doctrine and profound thoughts, and sweeter than honey. I hear you have written two wonderful little books of homilies on the Prophet Ezechiel ; send them to me, I beseech you, for I am thirsting to read them. I have read the six books of St. Jerome on this prophet, but they do not cover even half the ground. Therefore send us at least your second book on Ezechiel, as well as a commentary on the Canticle of Canticles from the words : " I will go to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense," <sup>25</sup> to the end, and elucidate for us the obscurities of the Prophecy of Zacharias. I know I am asking much from you, but you have much at your command, and you know right well that more interest is required from one who has received much than from one who has received little.

May your charity persuade you to honor me with a reply. Do not let the harshness of my letter prevent you from answering it, for my anger is directed only against error : to you personally I render from the depths of my heart all due homage and respect. . . . Forgive me, holy Father, I beg of you, for writing thus boldly to you, and remember me, a vile sinner, at least once in your holy prayers to our common Lord.

I think it superfluous to commend to you my messengers : receive them as men who walk in the name of the Lord.

If your answer to my appeal, as I have heard from your beloved Candidus, is likely to be, that the Gallic custom of celebrating Easter is an ancient one and cannot therefore be changed, I reply : In that case the error is evidently an ancient one, but more ancient still is the truth that shows it to be false.

<sup>25</sup> Canticle of Canticles, 4 : 6.

This letter was accompanied by three treatises in defence of the Celtic Easter computation. Although it appears to be certain that both the letter and the *pro memorias* reached their destination,<sup>26</sup> we have no clue as to the nature of Gregory's reply. At all events it was considerably delayed, owing no doubt to the insecurity of the roads in those troublous times.

While awaiting the decision of a court of appeal higher than that of the bishops, Columban continued to keep Easter as before. In 602 he celebrated it on 8 April, a week earlier than the rest of Gaul, and in the following year on 31 March, which coincided once more with the Jewish Passover according to the Victorian cycle. Instead of renewing their remonstrances, the Burgundian bishops determined to take energetic steps without any further delay. A council was convened<sup>27</sup> and Columban was summoned to attend and explain his conduct in the Easter question.

Columban, however, thought it better not to appear in person at the synod, not because he feared for his safety—he was above such considerations—but because he was afraid lest, in the heat of discussion, he might overstep the bounds of Christian charity. The letter which he sent to the assembled Fathers is more than a mere apology for not appearing before them: it is at the same time an earnest appeal to the bishops and priests to live up to their high calling. He knows right well that his own future and the future of his beloved foundations is in the hands of the bishops, and yet the general tone of his letter is not that of a suppliant for favor and indulgence, but rather of a master instructing his disciples.

He begins by thanking God that so many pious bishops have some together in council on his account. He admonishes them to meet as often as possible in spite of the distracted state of the times, and hopes they will be able, the Lord Jesus presiding, to discuss with profit not merely the much mooted

<sup>26</sup> *Vit. Salaberg*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Some identify this synod with the synod of Chalon-sur-Saône, mentioned by Fredegar (*Chron.*, C. 24), at which St. Desiderius of Vienne was deposed and banished. This hardly seems probable to me, for Columban says expressly that the synod had been convened on his account: "Deo gratias, quod vel pro me de Pascha discutiendo occasio vobis sanctae effecta est synodi"; whereas the synod of Chalons was summoned to examine the charges preferred against St. Desiderius by Arigius of Lyons and Brunhilde. The synod which met to discuss the Easter question appears to have been previous to that of Chalon.

Easter question, but other far more important ones also, especially such as concern ecclesiastical discipline.

This admonition is followed by a searching examination of conscience :

Let each one examine himself and see whether he is a true disciple of Jesus Christ, or whether he is such only in words. Whoever shirks the labor of resisting evil and evil-doers is a hireling and not a true shepherd of the Church. I touch on this question lightly in passing ; but, if you wish to teach us, your inferiors, remember that the sheep do not listen to those whose voice is not like that of the True Shepherd, but fly from him. The preaching of the hireling cannot penetrate into the hearts of those who must be led by good example on the way of discipline. If the shepherd does not hear the voice of the Supreme Shepherd, his own voice will not be heard by his sheep, and what the teacher despises in his own actions, he cannot by his words hold up to others for imitation. Let us all, therefore, whether we be clerics or monks, first observe in all simplicity the true canons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, viz., humility, chastity, renouncement of our own wills, then we shall be able, having laid aside all pride, to decide the controverted question of the Paschal canons. When a divergence arises, such as the present one in regard to the celebration of Easter, the truly humble cannot be contentious—the Church of God has no such custom, says the Apostle—but their sole object will be to discover the truth, error being their only foe. Let us therefore, my Fathers, my well-beloved Brothers, proceed with this investigation in the same spirit ; let us see whose tradition is the true one, yours or that of your brethren of the West.

For Columban this question is already settled, for he immediately adds : “ All the Churches of the West [i. e., of the British Isles] agree that the Resurrection cannot be observed before the Passion, that is before the equinox, nor later than the 20th moon.” Still, he is prepared to make a concession ; he no longer insists on his former demand that the Frankish Church should return to the computation of Anatolius : all that he now asks is, that he be permitted to celebrate Easter with his monks according to the Irish custom.

I am not the originator of this difference ; I have come into these parts, a poor stranger, for the love of Christ the Saviour, our common Lord and God ; I beg of your Holinesses but this one grace : that you will permit me to live on in silence in the depths of these forests

near the bones of seventeen of my brethren, whom I have already seen die; I will pray for you with those who remain to me as I ought, and as I have done these twelve years. Let us live with you in this Gaul where we are now, since we are destined to live together in the kingdom of heaven, if we be found worthy to enter therein. For we have one kingdom promised to us and one hope through our calling in Christ Jesus, with whom we shall reign, if we first suffer with Him. Despite our lukewarmness, we will follow, as best we can, the doctrines and precepts of Christ and the Apostles. These are our weapons, our sword and shield, and our only vindication. To remain faithful to them we have left our country and have come among you; and our earnest wish and prayer is, that we may remain true to them till death. Our fate, the fate of a few poor old pilgrims, is in your hands: consider whether it would not be better to console them than to annoy and distress them.

I did not dare to go to you for fear of entering into some dispute with you, contrary to the advice of the Apostle, who says to Timothy: "Contend not in words"; and elsewhere: "If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the Church of God;"<sup>28</sup> but I will open my heart to you and show you how I believe above all in the traditions of my country, which are also those of St. Jerome. If you prefer to follow Victorius, if you consider his canon to be as good as that of Anatolius, I shall not quarrel with you; for the Apostle says: "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good".<sup>29</sup> God forbid that we should delight our enemies, that is the Jews, the heretics, the pagans, by strife among us Christians, God forbid!

Columban was convinced, whether rightly or wrongly it is impossible to say, that the bishops would not tolerate him any longer in their midst unless he submitted to their demands. He was ready to make concessions, as we have seen; he would cease to make propaganda for his views, but he preferred to go into banishment rather than to give up a custom of his native land which had become so dear to him and which he firmly believed to be founded on the teachings of the Scriptures and on true Catholic tradition. He continues:

If God should inspire you to expel me from the desert place which I have sought here from beyond the seas, I should only say with the Prophet: "If for my sake this great tempest is upon you,

<sup>28</sup> II Tim. 2:14; I Cor. 11:16.

<sup>29</sup> I Thess. 5:21.

take me up, and cast me into the sea, and the sea shall be calm to you". But before you cast me into the sea, it is your duty to follow the examples of the sailors, who, though pagans, tried first to come to land: "And the men rowed hard to return to land, but they were not able, because the sea tossed and swelled upon them".<sup>80</sup> Permit me to suggest to you, if it be not an excess of presumption in me to do so, that, as many follow the broad way that leads to destruction, it would be better for you to encourage rather than to hinder the few who direct their course to the narrow gate that leads to life, lest perchance you fall under the condemnation of the text which says: "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men: you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter". . . .<sup>81</sup>

With an impressive appeal for peace and harmony between the secular clergy and the monks, which the long-continued conflict between the bishops on the one hand and the foremost representative of monasticism on the other had seriously impaired, Columban brings his message to the synod to a fitting close:

St. Jerome tells the bishops to imitate the Apostles, and the monks to follow the Fathers who have before them walked in the way of perfection; for the rules of the priests and of the monks are very different. Let each one be faithful to the profession which he has embraced; but let all follow the Gospel and Christ their Head. Only then will the union of hearts be perfect, and peace and charity lasting, if all endeavor to fulfil the divine commands; only then will the whole Church of God, borne up as it were on the pinions of a holy enthusiasm, tend heavenward. May the freely given grace of our Lord Jesus Christ inspire us all to despise the world and to love and seek Him alone together with the Father and the Holy Spirit to whom be praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Pray for us, my Fathers, as we, despite our unworthiness, pray for you, and regard us not as strangers to you; for we are all members of the same body, whether Gauls or Britons, whether Spaniards or descendants of other nations. Let us therefore rejoice in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, and let us hasten "to meet unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ".<sup>82</sup> In Jesus let us love one another, encour-

<sup>80</sup> Jonas 1: 12-13.

<sup>81</sup> Matth. 7: 13, 14; 23: 13.

<sup>82</sup> Eph. 4: 13.

age one another, correct one another, visit one another and pray for one another, that so we may one day reign with Him and share in His triumph.

I entreat you all, my holy and most patient Fathers and Brothers, to forgive the talkativeness and overboldness of a man whose task is beyond his strength.

The bishops condemned, as they were in duty bound to do, Columban's Easter practice, but they did not resort to the extreme measures apprehended by him to enforce their decision. The earnest, fearless tone of the great abbot's letter, especially the telling reference to the unity of faith and hope, had not failed to make a deep impression on them. No doubt other less ideal considerations also had their share in inclining them to deal gently with him. Close personal relations subsisted between him and certain of the Burgundian bishops. He had addressed, as he said himself, a letter to Arigius of Lyons, the metropolitan of Burgundy and the most influential churchman in the Frankish dominions, and they knew that an appeal had been made to Pope Gregory, who might possibly interfere in favor of a man who was making such heroic efforts for the moral regeneration of the people. Lastly—and this was a consideration of paramount importance in those days—if they did send an ultimatum to Luxeuil, could they be sure of the support of the secular arm in case of resistance? What, above all, would be the attitude of the terrible Brunhilde? For these reasons the bishops did not deem it advisable to push Columban to the wall just then by confronting him with the alternative of accepting the Gallic Easter practice or of resigning the headship of his monasteries.

Columban was not at all satisfied with this action, or rather non-action, of the synod. The least he had hoped for was, that the bishops would tell him that he could continue unmolested to observe Easter as he had hitherto done. Their silence augured no good. They might at any time renew their protestations, and he would never be able to enjoy that security which was so indispensable for the healthy development of his monastic institutions. There was danger too that the conflict with the bishops would sooner or later react unfavorably on his own monks, the vast majority of whom were



Franks and Gallo-Romans and thus quite naturally inclined to prefer their native customs to imported ones. Such a prospect was anything but encouraging, and something had to be done to dispel the gathering clouds. In this emergency he resolved to make fresh appeal to the Holy See. A favorable reply would not only silence all opposition in his own communities but also justify his resistance to the bishops in the eyes of the clergy and the people.

Communication with Rome was no easy matter in the early years of the seventh century. In the year 603 the Romans and the Lombards were once more at war; the Romans were defeated and an army of Lombards and Slavs was on the march to lay siege to the Eternal City. Gregory the Great, though scarcely able to leave his bed, had himself carried to the enemy's camp and prevailed on them to spare the city the horrors of a siege. Through the good offices of Queen Theodolinda peace was at last concluded between the contending parties (Nov., 603).<sup>33</sup> Under these circumstances it is not surprising that Columban's tabellarii should not have got any farther than the frontiers of Lombardy. When the news of Gregory's death (12 March, 604) reached Luxeuil, the abbot lost no time in dispatching a messenger to Rome with a letter to his successor.<sup>34</sup>

"For a long time," Columban begins, "I have entertained the ardent desire to visit the occupants of the Apostolic See, the sweet Fathers of the faithful, the highest dignitaries of the Church, but the unsettled state of the times has prevented me from doing so." Twice, he goes on to say, his messengers have been prevented from delivering letters to Pope Gregory of blessed memory, and now he makes bold to ask his successor to decide the difference that has arisen between him and the Gallic bishops in regard to the celebration of Easter. In order not to be obliged to expose anew the whole state of the case to His Holiness, he encloses copies of the letters ad-

<sup>33</sup> See St. Gregory's letter to Theodolinda. (Greg. Ep. lib. XIX, 12.)

<sup>34</sup> Sabinian (13 Sept., 604-22 Febr., 606), who had been for four years Gregory's legate at the Court of the emperor Mauritius. He was only in deacon's orders when elected to the supreme pontificate. It was probably to him that Columban's letter was addressed. (Krusch, *M. G. H. SS. Rer. Merov.*, IV, p. 7, note 2.)

dressed to St. Gregory and the Gallic synod. As his opponents defend their position with more noise than reason, and it is therefore impossible to come to an understanding with them, he feels constrained to appeal to the papal authority for assistance and comfort in his trials. He entreats the Pontiff, if there be no question of faith involved, to approve the tradition of the Celtic Fathers and to permit him and his monks to celebrate the Paschal rite in their place of pilgrimage as they had been accustomed to do in their native land. Though sojourning in a foreign land, he maintains that he is to all intents and purposes in his own country, having adopted none of the rules and customs of the Gauls; why then should he be compelled to conform to their Easter practice? There were well-authenticated precedents, too, for deciding in his favor: St. Polycarp and Pope St. Anicetus, though they differed on the Easter question and neither could win over the other to his views, nevertheless preserved mutual peace and charity without scandal to the faith, and the one hundred and fifty Fathers of the Second Council of Constantinople decreed that the Churches established amongst barbarous peoples should be permitted to live according to their inherited customs.<sup>85</sup>

Was this last effort of Columban to induce the Holy See to sanction the Paschal computation of his beloved Irish doctors more successful than his previous ones had been? We do not know; all we do know is that, as long as he remained in Luxeuil, he observed Easter according to the Anatolian style.

Neither Jonas nor Fredegar mention the Paschal controversy in their works; and yet it must have been much talked about at the time, for news of it reached even the British shores, as we learn from a passage in the letter of the Bishops of England, Laurentius, Mellitus and Justus, to the "Lords, Bishops and Abbots throughout all the country of the Scots," written in the year 605. "Before we knew them," their Lordships write, "we held both the Britons and the Scots in great esteem for sanctity, believing that they walked according to the custom of the universal Church; but becoming acquainted

<sup>85</sup> Κατὰ τὴν κρατήσανσαν συνήθειαν παρὰ τῶν πατέρων—secundum patrum quae servata est consuetudinem (Mansi, Conc., III, 559).

with the Britons, we thought that the Scots had been better. Now we have learnt from Bishop Dagan, who came into this aforesaid island, and the Abbot Columban, in Gaul, that the Scots in no way differ from the Britons in their walk". Columban, however, was not so intransigent as the good Bishop of Ennereilly,<sup>36</sup> of whom the English bishops have this complaint to make: "When Bishop Dagan came to us, not only did he refuse to eat at the same table, but even to eat in the same house where we were entertained".<sup>37</sup>

Looking back on the whole conflict between Columban and the bishops of Gaul at the distance of thirteen hundred years, we could certainly wish that it had never occurred; we could wish that our Saint had been less intractable, less hot of temper; we should prefer him to have been more moderate in his language and more considerate of the persons and the feelings of his opponents; still there was much to excuse him both in the nature of the controversy in which he was engaged and in his own character and training. The Easter question was a question in which faith did not enter; considered in itself, it was, as Columban hints in his letter to the bishops, of less significance than the least of the prescriptions of the Gospel. The traditions which he championed were those in which he had been brought up. They had been hallowed by the whole glorious line of Irish saints, by a Ciraan of Clonmacnoise, a Finnian of Clonard, a Columkille of Iona, and by his own spiritual father, Comgall of Bangor. In Britain, in Scotland and Ireland, his countrymen were stubbornly defending these same traditions against the attacks of the Latins: would it not be treasonable for him, he urged, to surrender them without a struggle?

But his conduct is perhaps best explained by his own character, made up as it was of apparently irreconcilable elements. Gentleness was paired with inflexibility; love of peace and solitude with keen delight in argument and controversy. He was profoundly humble, but impatient of contradiction when he believed that he was in the right. He was most respectfully attached to the papal authority, but ready to beard the person

<sup>36</sup> Ennereilly or Inver Daeile in Wicklow.

<sup>37</sup> Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, 3 (ed. Sellar).

in whom it was vested, if he thought the interests of the Church demanded it. He left home and kindred to win souls for Christ, but his patriotism was so deeply rooted and so exclusive that he could not make the lighter sacrifice of giving up the customs of his native land when it would have been to the advantage of his mission to do so. In defence of his own Irish doctors he did not hesitate to place an *obiter dictum* of St. Jerome in the balance with the decision of a pontiff whose sanctity he revered and to whose wisdom and learning he paid a warm tribute of admiration.

By the sharpness of his tongue and his pen Columban may have lost some of the prestige which his great virtues and his commanding personality had won for him; but it was surely only in the eyes of such as were too little themselves to be above petty considerations. His life was so blameless in every other respect that all right-minded men must have readily pardoned him his occasional asperities of temper. With the same fearless independence and utter disregard of personal consequences with which he had entered the lists for the usages of his native land against the bishops, he was soon to champion the commandments of God against a dissolute king and an unscrupulous queen.

## VIII.

### COLUMBAN AND BRUNHILDE.

There stands the messenger of truth: there stands  
The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,  
His office sacred, his credentials clear,  
By him the violated law speaks out  
Its thunders. . . . . —Cowper, *The Task*.

**I**N the year 595 Childebert II, under whom, as we have seen, Luxeuil was founded, died by poison on his return from a campaign against the Bretons, just as he was preparing to take the field against Chlothar of Neustria and Fredegunde. He was succeeded by his two sons, Theodebert II and Theoderic II, the former receiving Austrasia, the latter, Burgundy with Orléans as his capital. As both were still mere boys—Theodebert was born in 585 and Theoderic in 587—their grandmother Brunhilde reigned in their stead. In Neustria, Fredegunde guided the ship of State for her eleven-year-old son Chlothar II. The war between the rival queen-mothers, which had come to a temporary stand-still after the bloody battle of Droissy (592), broke out again with redoubled fierceness. Fredegunde took possession of Paris and other cities in the valley of the Seine, and Brunhilde invaded the Neustrian territory from the north. The armies met at Lafaux near Soissons and Brunhilde was defeated. This was Fredegunde's last triumph, for she died very shortly afterwards—a natural death, so far as we know (596-97):

Brunhilde survived her enemy for many years, but they were years of diminished influence and power, if not of diminished malice. Although she was the recognized guardian of her elder grandson Theodebert, and exercised in his name many of the prerogatives of royalty, she had no place in the affections of her subjects. The Austrasian nobility hated her, because she had done all in her power to humble them in order to promote the interests of the crown. After the defeat of

Lafaux, which was ascribed to the treachery of the nobles, Brunhilde seems to have lost much of the self-control and caution that had up till that time distinguished her favorably from Fredegunde. In 598, Duke Wintrion of the Champagne, one of the most powerful subjects in the Austrasian kingdom, was assassinated by her hirelings. This act of tyranny made her position untenable; in the following year she was driven out of Metz. A beggar found her wandering alone in the fields about Arcissur-Aube and at her request brought her to her younger grandson at Orléans. Theoderic welcomed her joyfully and confided the reins of government to her hands.<sup>1</sup>

In consequence of the ill-treatment which she had received at the hands of Theodebert, Brunhilde's former love for him was changed into deadly hate, and the rest of her life was spent in plotting how she might be revenged on him and on the proud Austrasian aristocracy. Still she was content to bide her time. Chlothar, the son of Chilperic's tirewoman, had first to be dealt with. With consummate tact she succeeded in bringing about an alliance between her grandsons, and their united armies gained a great victory over Chlothar at Dormelles on the Orvanne (600). Brunhilde urged them to follow up their victory and to dethrone Chlothar, but they contented themselves with depriving him of the greater part of his dominions. After this victory the brothers turned their attention to the south-western corner of Gaul, the old Novempopulania, which had recently been invaded by the Vascons from Northern Spain. They subdued the country without much difficulty, and appointed a duke to govern it (602). In 604, Chlothar attempted to recover his lost dominions, but he was defeated by Theoderic at Étampes on the Jouine and saved from complete destruction only by the intervention of Theodebert.

Theoderic's successes in the field had so enhanced his power and influence that Brunhilde thought the time was at last come for making a supreme effort to unite all the Frankish lands under his sceptre. To incite him to make war on Theodebert she told him that his brother was not Chilperic's son, but the son of a gardener. Protadius, the astute and un-

<sup>1</sup> Fredegar, *Chron.*, 19. The beggar, adds Fredegar, was afterwards rewarded with the bishopric of Auxerre.

scrupulous Mayor of the Palace, eagerly seconded her, and Theoderic was at last prevailed upon to take the field against his brother. When the two armies came in sight of each other at Quiersay-sur-Oise near Noyon, Theoderic's soldiers refused to fight, and when Protadius tried to force them into battle, they fell upon him and cut him to pieces (605). Theoderic was obliged to make peace with his brother, and Brunhilde had to defer her plans of empire and revenge to a more favorable time. In the meanwhile she did all in her power to keep her influence over her grandson unimpaired. To this end she resorted to a device so infamous that it disgraces her memory more than any of the other crimes laid to her charge. Theoderic had arrived at the age when the passions are awakened, and, like so many other Merovingians, he began to lead a life of sin. Instead of warning him, and insisting on his taking to himself a legitimate wife, she encouraged him in his sins, "fearing," as Jonas says, "that, if he married, she would lose much of her dignity and power".<sup>2</sup>

Effeminate as he was, Theoderic was not bad at heart. He was even religious in his own way. When the body of St. Victor was discovered in the year 602 by the Bishop of Maurienne in Savoy, he hastened to Geneva to be present at its solemn translation and richly endowed the church in which it was enshrined.<sup>3</sup> Though far from being a saint himself, he was proud to have a saint like Columban in his dominions. He often visited Luxeuil and "in all humility asked the abbot to pray for him". Columban took occasion on these visits to reprimand him severely for his scandalous life and to urge him to exchange the sinful pleasures of illicit intercourse for the true joys of a legitimate marriage; he would in this way, he said, secure not only his own welfare but also that of his people, for the royal race would then spring from an honorable marriage and not, as it were, from a house of shame.<sup>4</sup>

The young king was at last thoroughly frightened and promised to follow the advice of his monitor. In the year 607 he sent Bishop Arigius of Lyons with two Burgundian noble-

<sup>2</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 18.

<sup>3</sup> St. Victor (together with St. Ursius) was martyred at Solothurn during the Diocletian (Maximian) persecution.

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 18.

men, Rocco and Aeborin, to Spain to sue for the hand of Ermenberga, the daughter of Witteric, king of the Visigoths. Before delivering her up to them, Witteric made them promise on their oath that Theoderic would never put her away. She was presented to the king at Chalon, who received her with joy and treated her kindly. Before long, however, Brunhilde succeeded in poisoning his mind against her, and the solemnization of the marriage was deferred indefinitely.<sup>5</sup>

Brunhilde was incensed at Columban for having dared to cross her ambitious plans; but she artfully concealed her resentment and even pretended to entertain the deepest veneration for him. It chanced one day, Jonas relates, that the blessed Columban visited Brunhilde at the royal manor house called Brocariacum.<sup>6</sup> When she saw him enter the hall, she brought the illegitimate sons of Theoderic and set them before him. He asked what they wanted of him. "They are the king's sons," she answered; "strengthen them with your blessing." Seeing through the wile of the woman, how she wished him by his blessing to confer a kind of legitimacy on the children in the eyes of the people and to set the scruples of Theoderic at rest, his quick Celtic temper was thoroughly aroused. "Know this," he said, "that these boys shall never hold the kingly sceptre, for they are the offspring of incontinence and crime."<sup>7</sup> These words, whose bitterness was softened neither by the prophet's tone of voice nor the glance of his eye, pierced the proud queen's heart with the sharpness of a dagger. Pale with rage, she ordered the children to be taken away, and in her heart she swore to be revenged on the bold monk.

Not daring as yet to lay violent hands on him, she vented her fury against his monasteries. She forbade the monks to appear outside the monastery enclosure, and the inhabitants of the surrounding country were threatened with the severest punishment if they dared to take them into their houses, to

<sup>5</sup> Fredegar, 30. Witteric (whom Fredegar calls Bettericus), the murderer of King Linba, reigned from 603 to 610, when he was in his turn murdered. He was succeeded by Gundemar and two years later by Sisebutus (Sisebod), the friend of St. Isidore of Seville and the biographer of St. Desiderius of Vienne.

<sup>6</sup> Identified by some with Bruyères-le-Châtel (Seine-et-Oise), by others, with more reason, with Bourcheresse. There is also a Bruyères near Epinal in the Vosges.

<sup>7</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 19.



visit them or to help them in any way. To obtain relief from these vexatious measures, which, if carried out to the letter must eventually mean the ruin of his monasteries, Columban resolved to address himself to the king in person.

It was late in the evening when he arrived at Époisses,<sup>8</sup> where Theoderic and his court were then tarrying; but, though invited to do so, he obstinately refused to enter the palace. When the king was informed of his presence and of his refusal to cross his threshold, being well acquainted with the character of his visitor, he judged it prudent not to insist on this point of etiquette. "It is better," he said to his attendants, "to honor the man of God by furnishing him with all he requires, than to provoke the wrath of God by offending His friends." Then he ordered a sumptuous repast to be prepared and to be set before Columban. When he saw the choice meats and the rare wines and the costly tableware, he asked the servants what it all meant. "The king," they answered, "has ordered this meal to be served to you." But he would not touch any of the delicacies. "It is written," he said, "'the Most High approveth not the gifts of the wicked'."<sup>9</sup> It is not fitting that the lips of the servants of God should be defiled by tasting of the food offered by a prince who forbids the servants of God to enter not only his own dwelling but also the dwellings of others"; and, seizing the plates and the goblets, he dashed them to pieces on the pavement.

Great was the consternation of the domestics and the courtiers at this act of defiance on the part of the abbot. The guilty king and his still guiltier grandmother were horror-struck. What would this Elias do next? Would he call down the curse of Heaven upon their hearth and their kingdom as he had upon their gifts? They did not dare to brave his anger then and there, but early on the following morning they went together to the man of God and, with repeated assurances of amendment, humbly entreated him to pardon the injustice they had done him.<sup>10</sup>

Sincerely grateful to God for the happy issue of his difficult and dangerous enterprise, and rejoicing at the prospect of

<sup>8</sup> *Spissia*, now Époisses near Semur (Côte-d'Or).

<sup>9</sup> *Ecclus.* 34: 23.

<sup>10</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 19.

the king's conversion, Columban returned to his forest home. But Theoderic's good resolutions, born as they were of fear, were not proof against the onsets of passion. Ermenberga was still at his court; if he could muster sufficient courage to put away his concubines and instal her as his lawful wife and queen, all would be well. But Brunhilde had set herself against this marriage, and so great was her ascendancy over her grandson that, at her instigation, he sent Ermenberga back to her father within a year after her arrival in his dominions.<sup>11</sup>

When news of this outrage reached Luxeuil, Columban's delicate sense of justice and honor was wounded to the quick. Ermenberga was Theoderic's lawful wife; through his ambassadors he had promised under oath never to repudiate her, and now he had brutally discarded her and added one more crime to the long, ugly Merovingian catalogue. Surely such a shameless disregard of the laws of God could not go unpunished! Columban might have told himself that it was not his business to call the king to account: there were bishops enough in the land who had a prior right and a prior duty to do this. But he knew too well of what stuff most of them were made: he had told them in his letter on the Easter question, and they had shown it themselves in the case of the holy bishop of Vienne. At the instance of Brunhilde they had deposed and banished Desiderius at the Council of Chalon,<sup>12</sup> and when he was stoned to death by order of the king on his return to his diocese,<sup>13</sup> not one of them had dared to protest. It was clear that if the cause of right was to be defended, he must enter the lists himself. And he did so without a moment's hesitation and with his characteristic impetuosity and disregard of consequences. He wrote a letter to the king full of the severest reproaches and threatened him with excommunication.<sup>14</sup>

Although this letter has not come down to us, we can imagine the tone in which it was written; we can imagine too the effect it produced on Theoderic. And Brunhilde, his evil genius, was by to goad him on to revenge. This stranger from the ends of the earth, she said to him, this houseless wan-

<sup>11</sup> Fredegar, 30.

<sup>12</sup> Fredegar, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>14</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 19: "Beatus Columbanus litteras ad eum verberibus plenas direxit comminaturque excommunicationem".

derer whom your uncle Gunthram and your father Childebert loaded with favors, whose part we have more than once taken against the bishops—this ungrateful wretch has dared to threaten the king of the Burgundians with the thunders of the Church! We must rid the land of him! But incensed as Theoderic was against his uncomfortable monitor, he could not make up his mind to proceed against him. In his heart he had to admit that the abbot was right. Besides, under what pretext could he imprison or banish him? Surely he could not tell all the world that he was punishing the abbot of Luxeuil because he had rated him for his licentious life.

While the king wavered, Brunhilde acted. She stirred up the courtiers against Columban, says Jonas; and incited the bishops to find fault with his monastic rule. She reminded them that, in spite of their repeated remonstrances, he still celebrated Easter according to the Celtic style; that the discipline in force in his communities was of a severity unknown elsewhere, and that, contrary to the customs of the land, he excluded seculars from the interior of his monasteries. Urged by the party thus formed, Theoderic went to Luxeuil, but not, as in times past, as a friend of the abbot and a suppliant for heavenly favor: his angry mien, his numerous retinue, his arrogant behavior, betrayed the exasperated master.

"Why do you not conform to the customs of the country whose hospitality you enjoy?" was his answer to the hearty welcome extended to him as usual by the abbot; "and why do you not grant free access to your monastery to every Christian?"

"It is not our custom," Columban calmly replied, "to admit seculars into the dwellings set apart for the servants of God, but we have a guest-house for the fitting entertainment of all who come to us."

This dignified explanation did not satisfy the king. He had come to quarrel and he would not allow his anger to be disarmed.

"If you wish to continue to enjoy our favor," he declared, "you will in future permit all alike to enter your monasteries."

"If you dare to violate our rule," Columban indignantly replied, "I reject your gifts and favors. But if you have come to destroy the dwelling of the servants of God, know this, that your kingdom shall be destroyed with all your race!"

At these words the king, who had already advanced as far as the refectory, hastily retreated. But when Columban continued to reproach him, he turned angrily upon him:

"You hope no doubt to gain the crown of martyrdom at my hands," he said; "no, I am not so foolish as to commit so great a crime; however, as you obstinately refuse to adopt our customs, it will be no more than right to send you back to your own country." The courtiers applauded the king's words; they too, they said, would not brook a man who did not treat all men alike.

Far from attempting to conciliate the king, Columban boldly declared that he would not leave his monastery unless compelled to do so by force.

Theoderic did not stay to witness the expulsion: he entrusted the execution of his orders to one of his officers, Bauldulf by name, who conducted the abbot to Besançon, where he was to await the further pleasure of the king.

While in Besançon no restraint was put upon the abbot's movements. He used the liberty and leisure thus at his disposal to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of his fellow-men. Shortly after his arrival he was told that a number of condemned criminals were detained in the public prison of the city. Mindful of the words of the Lord: "I was in prison, and you came to Me," he visited them and preached the word of God to them. The poor wretches, deeply moved by such charity and zeal, fell on their knees and promised, if set free, to amend their lives and to do penance for their sins. Seeing their good dispositions and anxious to complete the work of conversion, with the aid of his faithful attendant Dommoal, he freed them from their chains, humbly washed their feet, brought them past the astonished goalers to the safe asylum of a near-by church, and afterwards obtained pardon for them from the authorities.

One Sunday morning he ascended the steep hill on the outskirts of the city, where the citadel now stands,<sup>15</sup> which commands a splendid view of the valley of the Doubs. With longing eyes he looked towards Luxeuil and Annegray and Fon-

<sup>15</sup> This citadel was built by Vauban, the celebrated engineer of Louis XIV. With Jonas's description of Vesontium it is interesting to compare that of Julius Caesar (*Bell. Gall.*, I, 38).

taines. He thought of his beloved children, so suddenly bereft of their father; of his solitary cell, and of the oratory where he had chanted the praises of God night and morning for so many years. What were his monks doing now? Were they faithful to the rule? Surely his place was in their midst.— And what was to prevent him from rejoining them? It was midday. The streets of the city were deserted; even the gates had been left unguarded, and neither soldier nor traveler was to be seen on the road to the north. His mind was made up; descending the hill, he passed quickly through the middle of the city and took the road to Luxeuil.

When Theoderic heard of his return, he sent a troop of soldiers to seize him and bring him back to Besançon. When they arrived, he was sitting quietly in the atrium of the church reading a book, but they did not find him, or perhaps did not care to find him, and returned empty-handed to the king. A second expedition, led by Count Berthar, the king's Chamberlain, and Baudulf, found Columban in the church, in the midst of his monks, chanting the Divine Office. The hundreds of white-cowled figures, the solemn chant, the majestic presence of the abbot in his elevated stall by the altar, filled the rough soldiers with reverential fear. "Man of God," they said, "we pray you to obey the king's orders and ours, and to return whence you came." But Columban remained immovable. "I do not think," he said, "that I should please my Creator, if I returned to my country, which I quitted for love of Him."

Seeing that they could not prevail on him to follow them, Berthar and Baudulf withdrew, leaving Ragamund with the hardiest of the soldiers behind to drag Columban by force, if need be, from his monastery. But even these rugged warriors, accustomed as they were to deeds of blood and violence, did not dare to lay hands on the saint. Falling on their knees, they entreated him, with tears in their eyes, to have pity on them, and to leave the monastery of his own free will. They were acting on the king's orders, they said, and they would be punished with death if they did not carry them out. Yielding at last to their prayers, he surrendered himself to them and followed them out of the church.

The monks were heartbroken. They pressed about him, weeping and bewailing their unhappy lot. What would be-

come of them without their beloved father? Who could direct them as he had done on the way to heaven? Perhaps his banishment was only the beginning of greater ills—of their own dispersion and of the ruin of their beautiful forest homes. Full of hope and confidence in God, Columban raised his eyes to heaven and prayed: "Eternal Creator of the universe, prepare Thou a fit place for us, where we, Thy people, may serve Thee for ever!" Then, turning to his children, he consoled them as best he could, bidding them not to despair, but to trust in the Almighty: dispersion and ruin would not follow on his removal from their midst; his work would continue and the number of his spiritual sons would increase from day to day.

All wished to follow him into exile; but Ragamund would allow none to accompany him except those who had come with him from Ireland or had joined him in Brittany: such was the will of the king. Eustace, the nephew and ward of Bishop Mietius of Langres, who was determined to follow his master in spite of this prohibition, had to be kept back by main force.

With a fervent prayer to God to take under His protecting care those whom a despot's will had torn from him, Columban bade adieu—a last adieu—to the sanctuary which he had reared to God in the wilderness, the scene of twenty years of labor and prayer and self-sacrifice. Farewell, thou "king of monks and driver of the chariot of God"! <sup>16</sup> Farewell, thou follower of the holy Baptist, thou champion of truth and purity! Thy steps are forced, but thou art free, freer than Theodoric and Brunhilde, thy persecutors, the slaves of sin!

<sup>16</sup> Four hundred years after his death these titles of honor were given to Columban. (Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, Bk. VII, "Colonies of Luxeuil in Gaul".)

## IX.

### PROSCRIBED!

**I**T was in the year 610, the twentieth after his arrival in Burgundy, that Columban set off into exile. He was far advanced in years now, yet age had not bowed him down; he was disappointed indeed in his hopes, but his courage was unbroken; and the divine fire that burned within him gave elasticity to his step. Ragamund had orders to bring him and his Celtic companions to Nantes, where they were to take ship for Ireland. They were first taken back to Besançon, a distance of about sixty miles, no doubt to gain the Roman road that led from there to the Loire. From Besançon they passed through the valley of the Doubs to Chalon-sur-Saône, and from there over the Côte-d'Or to Autun, in the land of the Aedui, the birth-place of St. Germanus, the intrepid bishop of Paris, and the scene of the martyrdom of St. Symphorian. From Autun they might have easily reached the Loire by skirting the southern ranges of the Morvan Mountains and following the course of the Alène to Decize; but for some unaccountable reason they were taken north to Saulieu and Avallon, and along the banks of the Cure and the Yonne to Auxerre, and then due south again to Nevers. From Nevers they made the journey to Nantes by water.

Jonas does not record the varied events of this wearisome journey, afoot and afloat, of many hundred miles, over hill and dale, and moor and mountain; but we are grateful for the few details that he does give us, for, while throwing new light on the character of Columban, they are full of interest for the student of the social and political history of Frankish Gaul in the beginning of the seventh century.

The proscribed monks were jealously guarded, armed soldiers preceding and following them all the way. Whatever food and drink they required, they had to procure for themselves as best they could; and as the authorities, both eccle-

siastical and civil, had been warned not to furnish them with supplies even if they offered to pay for them, their condition would have been hopeless indeed if Christian zeal and charity had not come to their aid. But if courageous men and women were found who were ready to brave the displeasure of the king and to succor them generously, others were rude and unmannerly, and shut their hearts and their doors against them. At Curé, where the Benedictines built a famous monastery in the twelfth century, the ruins of which are still to be seen, Theomanda, a noble and pious lady, received them into her house and entertained them hospitably; while at Avallon one of Theoderic's grooms rushed upon them with leveled lance and was prevented only by a miracle from slaying Columban.

The presence of the illustrious confessor and miracle-worker was everywhere the signal for the sick and the infirm and the possessed to crowd about him and to seek relief from their sufferings through his intercession. Forgetting his own miseries in beholding theirs, Columban healed and consoled the sick and the afflicted, and of his own meagre store of provisions assisted the destitute.

When they drew near to the Neustrian frontier at Auxerre, the conversation between the monks and their escort turned on the reverses which Chlothar II had sustained since the death of Fredegunde. Ragamund boasted of Theoderic's prowess, and predicted that the remnants of Chlothar's kingdom would soon fall into the hands of the Burgundians. "Remember this," Columban replied, "in three years this Chlothar, whom you now despise, will be your master."

At Nevers a boat was ready to convey the little band of exiles down the Loire to the sea-coast. During the embarkation, a soldier struck one of the monks, Lua by name, a most saintly man, with an oar, because he was not brisk enough about climbing into the boat. This act of wanton cruelty aroused the indignation of Columban. "Miserable wretch," he said to the ruffian, "why do you increase our sorrows? How dare you strike the weary members of Christ? Why are you so cruel to one who has done you no wrong? Why add to the number of your sins, which are already sufficient to damn you? Know that God will punish you for this crime, here at this very spot where in your rage you have struck a servant of



Christ!" The Saint's prediction was fulfilled to the letter. Returning later on over the same course, the unhappy man fell overboard and was drowned at the very spot where he had struck Lua.

When they arrived at Orléans, Theoderic's capital, not being permitted to enter any of the churches, they were obliged to encamp for the night in tents on the shore. Seeing that they were running short of provisions, Columban, on the following morning, sent two Brothers into the city to purchase some food. But none of the citizens dared to give or sell them anything, or to receive them into their houses: they were enemies of the king, and outlaws, and the Salic Law ordained that "whoever shall have fed or housed an outlaw—even if it were his own wife—shall be sentenced to six hundred denars, which make fifteen shillings".<sup>1</sup>

On their way back to the boat they met a Syrian woman who, when she learned who they were and what their errand was, invited them into her house and supplied them with all they required. "I am a stranger, too," she said, "and come from the distant land of the East; for many years I have wandered about in this land with my blind husband."<sup>2</sup> The kindness of these poor people was speedily and wonderfully rewarded. Potentinus brought the blind man to Columban, who, after a long and fervent prayer to God, in which all the monks joined, made the sign of the cross over him and restored his sight. This miracle and the healing of a number of *energumeni*, or demoniacs, made a deep impression on the inhabitants of Orléans, and they assisted the holy strangers in every possible manner, but secretly, for fear of the guards and the spies of the king.

Resuming their journey, they soon arrived at Tours, a dependency of the Austrasian crown. In vain Columban begged to be permitted to visit the tomb of St. Martin: Ragamund commanded the rowers to keep to the middle of the stream and to ply their oars with more vigor than usual in order to pass the harbor as quickly as possible. Heaven, however, was

<sup>1</sup> Salic Law, Title LVI. (Henderson, *Hist. Docum. of the Mid. Ages*, p. 187.) The Frank gold solidus weighed 73.5 grains.

<sup>2</sup> A small Syrian colony settled in Gaul during the reign of Childebert I. (+ 558.)

more obliging than the surly captain. A violent contrary wind arose, which made a hasty retreat into the harbor imperative, and Columban had the happiness of spending the night in prayer in the church of the great Apostle of Gaul. Here Leuparius, the bishop of the city, found him early on the following morning and offered him the hospitality of his house; which the Abbot, for the sake of his brethren, gladly accepted. At the dinner given in his honor, the Bishop asked him why he was returning to his country. "That dog of a Theoderic," he replied, "has separated me from my brethren." One of the guests, Chrodoald by name, a relative to King Theodebert, but a Burgundian subject, was shocked at this harsh answer; but not daring to provoke the wrath of the persecuted Abbot still more by contradicting him or replying in kind, he merely quoted the proverb: "It is better to drink milk than worm-wood". Turning to him, Columban said: "I see you wish to remain faithful to your king. Well, tell your friend and master that three years from this time he himself and his children shall be no more: God in His anger shall have rooted out his whole race!"—"And why do you speak thus?" asked the astonished nobleman. "Because," replied Columban, "I cannot conceal what God commands me to make known."

This was the third time, to our knowledge, that Columban predicted the impending ruin of the Burgundian dynasty. We do not know whether his words to Chrodoald were reported to Theoderic and Brunhilde, or not; but if they were, they had no other effect except to make the sovereigns still more anxious to place the wide ocean between them and their inexorable censor.

When Columban returned to the boat, his companions told him that all their traveling effects together with their little store of money had been stolen during the night. On hearing this distressing news, the Abbot immediately returned to the tomb of St. Martin and with childlike simplicity and confidence complained to him of his lack of vigilance.<sup>3</sup> "It was

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Adamnan, *Vit. Columbae*, II, 45: "We begin in a way almost to grumble at our Columba, saying: 'Doth it afford thee pleasure O Saint, this our unfortunate delay? Hitherto we looked for some comfortable solace of our toils from thee, as we thought thee to be a man of some considerable account in the sight of God.'" (Trans. Huyshe.)

surely not for this," he said, "that I spent the night in watching at thy tomb, that thou shouldest permit all our belongings to be stolen." He had scarcely left the church, when the thieves, tortured by remorse, of their own accord brought back the stolen property and humbly asked pardon of the Saint.

Rejoicing at this signal mark of the great St. Martin's special protection, and invoking the benediction of Heaven on Tours and its good bishop, who had not only replenished their stock of provisions, but had come in person to the boat to take leave of them, the exiles continued on their route and in a few days reached Nantes. Sophronius, the bishop of the city, and Theudoald, the military governor, had received orders to send them on to Ireland without delay; but, although Nantes was at that time the chief port in which the Irish and British trade was carried on,<sup>4</sup> there seems to have been some difficulty about securing passage for them.

During their stay in Nantes, Columban and his companions were lodged in a private house, and hardly any restraint was put upon their personal liberty. They continued to live the community life that had become so dear to them, and which they had not interrupted even during their long and arduous wanderings by land and water. A door-keeper, a cellarer and a regulator were appointed, and the monks went about their daily duties as if they were still in Luxeuil or Annegray, and the Divine Praises were chanted as fervently, if not so solemnly, as they had ever been in holy Bangor. Neither were there occasions wanting for the exercise of their zeal and charity. One day a poor man presented himself at their door and begged an alms for the love of Jesus.

"Go and give him something to eat," the Abbot said to the Brother in charge of the provisions.

"But we have no bread at all," the cellarer objected; "and there is only a little flour left, at most a measure."

"No matter; bring all you have," was Columban's reply, "and do not trouble yourself about to-morrow."

The Brother did as he was told, confident that God would provide for them in His own good time. The next three days were fast days for the members of the little community, for,

<sup>4</sup> See Reeves, *Adamni Vit. S. Columbae*, p. 57, note 3.

just as in Orléans, no one, not even the Bishop, would give or sell them anything: they had nothing, to use the expressive words of Jonas, except faith and hope to sustain their bodies with. But their hope was not vain: they were to experience once more the truth of the words of the Psalmist, which Columban had loved to quote for them in the early days of Luxeuil: "I have been young, and now am old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."<sup>5</sup> Procula, a rich lady, who lived at some distance from Nantes, hearing of their distress, sent them a hundred measures of wine, two hundred measures of wheat and a hundred measures of malt. When Columban was informed of this timely succor, he called all the Brethren together to thank God and to pray for their generous benefactress. "O admirable goodness of the Creator!" Jonas exclaims, interpreting the sentiments with which the Abbot and his companions were filled. "He allows us to suffer the pangs of hunger, in order to make us appreciate His bounty all the more; He subjects us to trial, in order to excite us to greater confidence and gratitude."

During the long days of waiting for the ship that was to take him against his will back to his native land, Columban's thoughts were occupied more than ever with his orphaned communities in the Vosges. Just as a mother cannot forget the child of her pains, so he also carried about with him in tender and anxious remembrance the children spiritually born to him amidst labors and trials and combats. His personal troubles had not damped his paternal solicitude for their welfare. His departure had been so sudden that he had not been able to make any arrangements for the government of his monasteries. He had perhaps also speculated on the possibility of the king relenting, and changing his determination of sending him out of the country. At all events, he had never quite given up the hope of returning sooner or later to his dear forest solitude. But when word was brought to him that a merchant vessel bound for Ireland had at last been found, he was undeceived in his anticipations.

He would never see Luxeuil again, he told himself; and he had as yet appointed no one to take his place. If the monks

<sup>5</sup> Ps. 36: 25.

were left to themselves to choose an abbot, would their choice fall on the right man—on a man who would remain faithful to the Irish traditions, who would not go over to the enemy? Besides, his children needed encouragement and consolation; the Easter controversy had brought divisions into their ranks, and these had to be removed at all costs, for a house divided against itself cannot stand. These considerations, and the necessity he felt of unburdening his soul to them, prompted him to write to them before leaving the land of his pilgrimage. This letter, which has been fortunately preserved,<sup>6</sup> mirrors his soul so perfectly and brings him so near to us, revealing as it does so much of his human side, that the reader will be glad to have at least the most characteristic portions of it:

TO HIS DEAREST SONS AND PUPILS, TO HIS BROTHERS IN ABSTINENCE, TO ALL HIS MONKS, COLUMBA, GREETING IN THE LORD.

"Peace be to you"—the peace which the risen Lord wished His disciples—and everlasting charity. God alone knows how solicitous I am for your welfare, and how desirous of seeing you advance in wisdom and knowledge. Now that tribulation and persecution have arisen because of the word, take care you be not like that stony ground of which the Saviour speaks, where the good seed, having no deepness of earth, could not thrive; lest it be said of you also: "When there ariseth tribulation and persecution, they are presently scandalized".<sup>7</sup> We know that we received the word of the Lord with joy: let us take heed that it be not "only for a time". We have need of patience, that "the trial of our faith may be much more precious than gold". You know that our fight is not for earthly things: it is the old fight for the kingdom of heaven. Do not think that men persecute you of themselves: the demons are in league with those who envy you your spiritual possessions; against these put on the armor of God, and with the fiery darts of fervent prayer clear your way to heaven.

But remember, if your prayer is to prevail with God, you must be of one heart and one soul. It were far better you did not live under one roof, if your hearts are not of one accord. Therefore, I charge all who are of one mind with me and who love me and respect my will, to regard Attala as my rightful successor: to whom, however,

<sup>6</sup> *S. Col. Ep.*, IV. (Ed. Gundlach in *Monum. Ger. Hist.*, Epist. III, pp. 166-169.)

<sup>7</sup> *Matth.* 13: 21.

I leave the free choice either to remain with you or to come to me. If he prefers to come to me—and with the help of God he will soon arrive at certainty in this matter—Waldelenus shall be your Provost. In the meanwhile, let no one take on himself to go his own ways: such persons have done much harm among us in the past.

Addressing himself to Attala, his designated successor, Columban continues:

Dismiss without delay those who prove troublesome to you; but dismiss them in peace and love; only be sure to honor Libranus, and always keep Waldelenus, if he be still with you; may God give him everything that is good; may he become humble, and give him for me the kiss which in the hurry of departure I could not give him myself. If you find that you can be of use to souls, remain where you are; if dangers threaten, come to me—I mean dangers arising from discord, for I fear a fresh attack will be made on you on account of the Easter question, and perhaps they will try to drive you out unless you side with them; for, now that I am no longer with you, they will think you cannot resist them. Therefore, be cautious in your conversation with others, and preserve above all things unity amongst yourselves, being careful to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.<sup>8</sup> For of what advantage is it to form one body, if there is not also one heart?

As for me, I confess my soul is rent asunder; for while I have desired to serve all, “they fought against me without cause”,<sup>9</sup> and because I have trusted all, I have all but become a fool. Therefore, be wiser than I have been; for I would not have you take up the burden under which I have groaned. From my fate you will have learned that all warnings do not suit all men, for the characters and dispositions of men are very different. Take this diversity of character into account; diversify yourself, multiply yourself, for the good of those who will obey you with fidelity and love; and yet you still must fear, lest that very love become a danger to you. Let your heart be guided by the one desire, with which my own heart is inflamed—the glory of God and of His Church. . . . Let those who have kept my spirit continue to serve God according to the Rule, then they will become ever wiser and holier, if they strive to be humble and merciful. Let those, on the other hand, who are rebellious be dismissed: the obedient shall be their heirs. . . .

I write this to you, because I am undetermined what to do; I thought at first of visiting the pagan nations and of preaching the

<sup>8</sup> Eph. 4:3.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. 119:7.

Gospel to them, but what I have just heard of their apathy has almost discouraged me.

I had at first meant to write a tearful letter to you; but knowing that your heart is already overwhelmed with many cares and labors, I have written in quite another strain. I have permitted only gentleness to be seen outside, and chained down grief in the depths of my soul. I have tried to keep back my tears rather than to give vent to them; yet see how they begin to flow in spite of myself. But I *must* drive them back, for a valiant soldier does not shed tears on the field of battle. After all, what has befallen us is nothing new. Has it not been the subject, so to speak, of our daily preaching? And was there not a philosopher of old, wiser than his fellows, who was cast into prison for maintaining, against the rest of men, that there was but one God? The Gospels are full of all that is necessary to encourage us; for this were they mainly written: to teach the true disciples of Jesus crucified to bear their cross after Him. What a glorious example the Lord has left us, who voluntarily ascended the cross as a culprit—"He was offered because it was His own will"<sup>10</sup>—leaving us an example, as St. Peter says, that we "should follow His steps".<sup>11</sup> Blessed is he to whom it has befallen to have part with Him in His Passion and in His humiliation!

However, it is not enough that we suffer with Christ, we must also persevere in our sufferings: for only "he that shall persevere unto the end shall be saved".<sup>12</sup> The end is the test, and praise is sung only at the going out. But in order to persevere, let each one in all humility pray to God for help, for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy".<sup>13</sup> The mercy of God is better than life, however great a boon life may be to man. But they are not worthy of mercy who do not acknowledge their wretchedness in the sight of God, nor feel that of themselves they are unworthy of salvation, and that they can be rescued from the many dangers surrounding them only by the mercy of God. They may be conscious of having done good works, yet must they fear the judgments of God, and bewail their many sins, and put their trust in God alone. And the humbler their trust is, the more pleasing will it be to God; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in them that hope in His mercy".<sup>14</sup> No one will be saved by his own right hand: each one must use his ability—which also is a free gift of God—in fear and trembling, according to the will of God,

<sup>10</sup> Isaias 53: 7.

<sup>12</sup> Matth. 10: 22.

<sup>14</sup> Ps. 146: 11.

<sup>11</sup> I Pet. 2: 21.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 9: 16.

frequently repeating the prayer of the Psalmists: "Cast me not away from Thy face", and "let me not stray from Thy commandments".<sup>15</sup>

Let us, therefore, mount up to the City of God by the royal road of crucifixion of the flesh and contrition of heart; of bodily suffering and humiliation of spirit and conscientious fulfillment of duty; by the grace of Christ, by faith, hope, and charity.

Our perils are many, the struggle awaiting us is severe, and the enemy terrible; but the recompense is glorious, and the freedom of our will manifest. Without an adversary there is no conflict, and without a conflict there is no crown. Where there is conflict there is courage, vigilance, ardor, endurance, fidelity, wisdom, prudence, firmness. Thus, then, without war no crown, and, I add, without freedom no honor. Great and numerous as the afflictions are by which we are encompassed, which press upon us from all sides, God's strong arm, my dear Attala, will help us to gain the victory. . .

In the concluding portions of the letter he again addresses himself to all his monks:

While I write they come to tell me that the ship which is to carry me back against my will to my own country, is ready to weigh anchor; but if I care to flee, there is no guard by to prevent me: in fact, they seem to want me to escape. If I am cast into the sea as Jonas was, whose name in Hebrew also means columba, or dove, pray for me that, instead of a whale, some one else may bring your Jonas back safe to land.

But the end of my parchment obliges me to finish my letter, though I have still much to tell you. Love is not orderly; it is that has made my letter so confused. I should have been brief and said all I wished to say; still, I could not have said all, because of the difference of opinion among you. God's will be done in everything! Do not come to me simply from motives of personal affection, but only if you think it necessary to do so. Do not take advantage of my absence to create disorder, or to regain a liberty which would but lead you into the slavery of sin. He is mine, who loves unity; he is not mine, who causes discord: for, as the Lord says, "he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth".<sup>16</sup> If you perceive that the perfect life suffers more and more among you, and that I cannot return to you,

<sup>15</sup> Pss. 50:13; 118:10. This whole passage shows that Columban was free from even the slightest taint of Pelagianism, of which some of his countrymen were accused. (Cf. Bede, *H. E.*, II, 19.)

<sup>16</sup> Luke 11:23.



seek out another place for your monastery, where you will be able to carry on a more successful fight against sin and the snares of the devil. In the mean time, if you find that Attala is not the proper man to govern you, choose some one else to be your head. But if the present site pleases you, and God builds with you, increase with God's blessing to thousands of thousands. Pray for me, beloved of my soul, that I may live in God.

When Columban was informed that the vessel which was to take him to Ireland was ready to sail, he told his companions to embark; he would himself go down to the mouth of the Loire in a skiff. With a fair wind the merchantman sailed out of the harbor, but before it could gain the open sea it was beached by a heavy tidal current. For three days all efforts to set it afloat again were in vain. The captain, thinking that the monks he carried had brought down on him the vengeance of Heaven, declared he would keep them on board no longer, and he landed them and their luggage on the shore again, and soon after continued his voyage. The royal escort that had conducted the exiles to Nantes had in the meantime set out on their homeward journey, and as no one else dared to interfere with them, they were free to go where they pleased.

The stranding of the boat was regarded by Columban as a sign from God that he was not to return to his native land. Why should he not take the opportunity offered him to make his escape? Theoderic and Brunhilde had more pressing matters to attend to just then than the movements of the handful of foreign monks they had expelled from their kingdom. Theodebert had demanded the restoration of Alsace to the Austrasian crown to which it had formerly belonged. On Theoderic's refusing to give up what he had lawfully inherited from his father Childebert, Theodebert vindicated his pretensions by throwing a large army into the coveted province. After some fighting, in which neither side gained any marked advantage, it was agreed that the quarrel should be settled at a conference of the nobility of both kingdoms, the castle of Saloissa being selected as the place of the meeting. Theoderic appeared with ten thousand men; Theodebert, with a vastly superior force, ready to give battle. Thus outwitted, the Burgundian was forced to cede Alsace, the Sundgau and the Thurgau to his brother. About the same time, the Ala-

mannians defeated his troops in Burgundian Switzerland, and this province, too, was lost to him.<sup>17</sup>

Rumors of these events had reached Nantes and were no doubt instrumental in shaping Columban's future movements. After remaining a few days longer in his former quarters, he crossed over into Neustria and proceeded to Soissons, the royal residence.

Chlothar extended a hearty welcome to the fugitives, and entreated them to settle down in his dominions, offering them lands on which to found a new Luxeuil. But the passion for pilgrimage had once more awakened in Columban; his thoughts were directed more strongly than ever to Italy, the land of every pilgrim's longing and devotion. All he asked of Chlothar was an escort to bring him in safety to the court of Theodebert. He yielded, however, so far to the wishes of his royal host as to leave Potentinus, one of his ablest disciples, in his kingdom to found a monastery according to the rule of Luxeuil. Potentinus was still alive and abbot of Coutances when Jonas wrote his life of St. Columban.

Whilst Columban was at the Neustrian court, ambassadors came from Theodebert and Theoderic, each of whom was anxious to secure the support of Chlothar in the conflict which was inevitable after Theoderic's recent reverses in Alsace and Switzerland. In his perplexity, Chlothar applied to Columban for advice. "Have nothing to do with either," the Abbot replied, "before three years have elapsed, you will be in possession of the crowns of both."

But Columban possessed not only a prophet's gift of piercing the veil of the future—he was also animated with a true prophet's zeal for the honor of God and the observance of His laws. Though Chlothar's guest and protégé, he did not hesitate to draw that monarch's attention to certain disorders in his own conduct and that of his courtiers; and he had the satisfaction of seeing that his admonitions fell on no ungrateful soil: the king—"a genuine lover of wisdom," according to Jonas—was not only not irritated by the Abbot's boldness, but humbly listened to his reprimands and promised to do his best to set things right.

<sup>17</sup> Fred., IV, 37.

Under the protection of a royal escort Columban set out on his journey to Metz. But Providence was even more solicitous for his welfare than the Neustrian prince: It had sent him succor in his direst need on the long march to the sea, and now it did not fail to raise up powerful and devoted protectors to assist him in the prosecution of his plans. Passing through Paris, which Chlothar had recovered some time after 604, the pilgrims arrived at Meaux. About two miles from this city, in the villa called Pipimisiacus, dwelt Chagneric and Leudegunde, the parents of Columban's faithful minister Chagnoald. Chagneric was one of the wealthiest and most influential leudes of Austrasia and a personal friend of Theodebert. As soon as he learned of the exiles' arrival at Meaux, he offered them the hospitality of his house, dismissed their Neustrian escort, and promised to bring them himself to Metz.

The promise attached to those who welcome a prophet in the name of a prophet, and the just in the name of the just, was abundantly fulfilled in the case of Chagneric. No less than three saints of God were to shed imperishable lustre on his house. Before quitting his hospitable roof, Columban blessed and consecrated to God his little daughter Fara, or Burgundofara. Four years later she received the veil from the hands of Bishop Gundwald of Meaux and with her patrimony founded the monastery of Eboriacum, called after her Faremoutiers, whose fame for learning and holy living was so widespread that even the Saxon kings of England sent their daughters there to be instructed and united to their Heavenly Bridegroom.<sup>18</sup> Her older brother, Chagnoald, had already, as we have seen, dedicated himself to God in Luxeuil, and another brother, Faro, after bravely fighting the battles of his earthly king, devoted himself wholly to the service of his Heavenly Master and closed a long life fruitful of holy works as bishop of Meaux.<sup>19</sup>

Accompanied by Chagneric, Columban crossed the elevated plateau which forms the right bank of the Grand-Morin, and, descending into the valley of the Marne, stopped at the house of another Burgundian nobleman, Autharius, a relative, it

<sup>18</sup> Bede, *H. E.*, III, 8. Faremoutiers was a double, or mixed monastery, i. e., consisted of monks and nuns in separate buildings with the church in common.

<sup>19</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 21.

seems, of Chagneric and like him attached to the service of Theodebert. Although his stay at Vulciacus,<sup>20</sup> as the villa of Autharius was called, appears to have been brief, it was nevertheless fraught with inestimable blessings for its inmates. Autharius had three sons, Ado, Rado and Dado, two of whom were still quite young. Their mother, Aiga, brought them to Columban and asked him to bless them. He did so, and this blessing attended them throughout their lives, bringing them honors and high station while they were in the world, and urging them at last to turn their backs on the brightest prospects held out to them by royal favor, and to consecrate their talents and their fortunes to the service of God and His Holy Church. Ado was the first to leave the court: on an eminence overlooking the valley of the Marne he founded the famous monastery of Jouarre,<sup>21</sup> with which, a thousand years after, the name of the great Bossuet was to be so inseparably linked. Rado, who had been Dagobert's treasurer for several years, laid the foundations of the abbey of Reuil. About the year 635, Dado, or, as he afterwards called himself, Audoenus, the trusted friend and advisor of Dagobert I and Keeper of the Royal Seal,<sup>22</sup> followed the example of his brothers, and with their assistance erected a monastery, modelled on that of Luxeuil,<sup>23</sup> in the depths of the forests of Brie. He himself called his foundation Jerusalem, as a symbol of the peace and love whose home it was to be, but the people called it Resbach (Rebais, Deer Brook), from the little woodland stream on the side of which it stood. As its first abbot he selected Agilus of Luxeuil, a disciple of St. Columban. He himself was made bishop of Rouen in 641, and for forty-two years ruled that diocese with rare ability, completely renewing its spiritual life by numerous monastic foundations, one of which in Rouen itself has handed down his name to our own days.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ussy, dép. Seine-et-Marne.

<sup>21</sup> The first abness of Jouarre was St. Theodiecheldis. See Bossuet, *Pièces Concernant l'Abbaye de Jouarre*.

<sup>22</sup> Fred., IV, 78.

<sup>23</sup> The Rule followed in Rebais was a combination of the Rules of St. Columban and St. Benedict.

<sup>24</sup> For a description of the famous Abbey Church of St. Ouen see Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, VI, 19. He says the abbey of St. Ouen was pulled down by the magistrates of the town by way of giving work to some vagrants.

Thus we see that Columban's prediction was already coming true: far from bringing about the ruin of his work, his banishment was but the occasion of its wider diffusion and more generous growth. The Lord "had turned his captivity as a stream in the south".<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ps. 125:4.

**PART III.**  
**IN GERMAN LANDS.**



## I.

### COLUMBAN BECOMES A MISSIONARY. THE SCENE OF HIS LABORS.

**I**N the year 609 or 610, Columban was expelled from Burgundy by Theoderic and Brunhilde. He was taken to Nantes, where he was to be shipped off to Ireland. A violent storm drove the vessel back to the Gallic shore. The captain convinced that the monks he carried had brought him ill luck, landed them at the mouth of the Loire. Columban seized the opportunity offered him to escape and proceeded to the Neustrian court and from there to Metz, the capital of Austrasia.

At the court of Theodebert, by whom they had been most cordially received, the exiles had the happiness of meeting again with a number of their brethren of Luxeuil. Metz was only a short distance from the Burgundian frontier, and Atala, Eustace, Chagnoald, Sigisbert, Ursicinus and several others whose names are not mentioned, hearing of their beloved master's intention of proceeding thither, had secretly left their monastery to rejoin him. Theodebert was as eager as Chlothar had been to keep the great Abbot in his kingdom. He reminded him that there were still many pagans on the other side of the Rhine, who were waiting for some one to preach the Gospel to them. Why would he not settle down with his monks amongst them and try to convert them? He was ready, he added, to make him a grant of any fiscal lands he might select within the Austrasian dominions. Columban gave a more or less reluctant assent to the king's proposal, for his heart was set on the pilgrimage to Italy. "If you abide by your promise," he replied, "I will tarry in your kingdom for a time, and will make an attempt to spread the seed of the Christian faith in the hearts of the people."<sup>1</sup> The country about the Lake of Constance was extolled to him as of

<sup>1</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 27.



remarkable beauty and suitable in every way for his purpose, and he resolved to repair thither without delay. Besides being far enough removed from Luxeuil to discourage any more of his former disciples from following him, it was near the Alps—and on the other side of the Alps were Italy and Rome.

Provided by the king with a body of sturdy oarsmen, the pilgrims descended the Moselle to Coblenz, where their boats swung into the “wide and winding Rhine”. When Columban saw how the rowers toiled at their oars to make head against the rapid current, the refrain of an ancient boat-song ran through his mind:

Heia viri! nostrum reboans echo sonet heia!

Courage, men! let the echo of our song reply courage!

He thought it would encourage the boatmen to bend more lustily to their work if the strokes of their oars were accompanied by some such strain. So in imitation of the old pagan song, and retaining in part its wording, he composed a Christian sailor's song, the only example of its kind that has come down to us.<sup>2</sup> Just as the sailors—such is its theme—encourage one another to oppose stout hearts to wind and wave and shower, so should Christian men with firm faith and trust in God after the example of Christ resist and overcome the assaults of Satan:

1.

En silvis caesa fluctu meat acta carina

Bicornis Rheni,<sup>3</sup> et pelagus perlabitur uncta.<sup>4</sup>

Heia viri! nostrum reboans echo sonet heia!

2.

Extollunt venti flatus, nocet horridus imber,

Sed vis apta virum superat sternitque procellam.

Heia viri! nostrum reboans echo sonet heia!

<sup>2</sup> The text of this *Carmen Navale* was discovered by Dr. W. Meyer, Secretary of the City Library of Munich in a Leyden MS. of the tenth century. He sent it to Ernst Dümmler, who immediately recognized it as an imitation of the ancient Boat-Song discovered by him in a Berlin MS. From the name of the author on the margin the first part is cut off; the second part—*banus* has led Krusch and Gundlach (N. Archiv., XV, 514) to ascribe it to St. Columbanus, with all the more probability as in the Berlin MS. the ancient boat-song is immediately followed by Columban's *Verses to Fidolius*.

<sup>3</sup> Verg. Aen., 8, 727.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 91.

## 3.

Nam caedunt nimbi studio caeditque procella,  
Cuncta domat nisus, labor improbus omnis vincit.<sup>5</sup>  
Heia viri! nostrum reboans echo sonet heia!

## 4.

"Durate et vosmet rebus servate secundis,<sup>6</sup>  
O passi graviores, dabit Deus his quoque finem".<sup>7</sup>  
Heia viri! nostrum reboans echo sonet heia!

## 5.

Sic inimicus agit invisus corda fatigans,  
Ac male temptando quatit intima corde furore.  
Vestra, viri, Christum memorans mens personet heia!

## 6.

State animo fixi hostisque spernite strophas,  
Virtutum vosmet armis defendite rite.  
Vestra, viri, Christum memorans mens personet heia!

## 7.

Firma fides cuncta superat studiumque beatum,  
Hostis et antiquus cedens sua spicula frangit.  
Vestra, viri, Christum memorans mens personet heia!

## 8.

Rex quoque virtutum rerum fons summa potestas  
Certanti spondet, vincenti praemia donat.  
Vestra, viri, Christum memorans mens personet heia!

The journey turning out longer than they had anticipated, the travelers found themselves entirely destitute of provisions when they reached Mainz. The rowers said they had friends in the city, who would be only too glad to provide them with all necessities. But they were sorely disappointed: on inquiry they found no one who was prepared to assist the strangers, and returned crestfallen to the landing. Columban reassured them, "I have a friend here," he said; "he will not turn me away." And while all wondered how one who had never

<sup>5</sup> Verg. Georg., I, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Aen., I, 207.

<sup>7</sup> Aen., I, 199.

been in Mainz before could have a friend there, he betook himself to the church, and throwing himself on his knees before the altar, prayed long and fervently to the Great Dispenser of all things. He was still absorbed in prayer when Lesio, the bishop of the city,<sup>8</sup> entered the church. Seeing the strangely habited and tonsured monk, he went up to him and asked him who he was. "I am a pilgrim from the West," Columban replied.—"Perhaps you are in want of provisions for your journey," the bishop said; "if so, come to my house and I will give you all you require." Afterwards the bishop used to protest to his friends that a sudden impulse, or rather a divine inspiration had urged him to visit the church at that unusual hour, and that he had never before been so eager to bestow alms on the needy as on that occasion.

Columban's visit to Mainz, brief as it was and apparently not renewed, was not without influence on the Irish pilgrims who followed him to the Continent: the kind reception he had met with at the hands of the bishop no doubt induced others, who had read his life, to direct their steps to the Golden City. That they really did do so is evidenced by the existence of a Scottish church in Mainz in the eighth century.<sup>9</sup> It was at Mainz, too, that the celebrated chronicler, Marianus Scottus, closed his earthly pilgrimage as a recluse.

Leaving Mainz the travelers passed through Worms, famous in song and story as the capital of the once mighty Burgundian kingdom, and Speyer, a place of very little importance in those days, though it could boast of having been a bishopric in the fourth century, and at Seltz (Saloissa) entered the territory of the Alamannians, which was to be the scene of Columban's missionary labors for the next two years. It will not be out of place to cast a glance at the varying for-

<sup>8</sup> Fred., IV, 38.

<sup>9</sup> The *Ecclesia Scott.* of Mainz is mentioned in a Fulda MS. of 817. (Droncke, *Cod. Diplom. Fuld.*, No. 337.) It was afterwards converted into a parish church (St. Paul), and dismantled in 1657 to make room for the new fortifications. A *Capella sancte Brigide* is mentioned in a document dated 19 March, 1259. There was an altar of St. Brigid, with a benefice in the church of St. Paul. The feasts of St. Brigid (1 Feb.) and St. Disibod (8 July) are included in a tenth century calendar of the monastery of St. Alban. Irish MSS. have not been found in Mainz, but the neighboring monastery of Lorsch preserved the Irish Codex containing the last five books of Livy, which is at present in the court library of Vienna. (*Katholik*, 1868, 2, p. 313.)

tunes of this interesting people from their first appearance on the stage of history till the beginning of the seventh century, for this will help us to understand the narrative which follows.

The Alamanni<sup>10</sup> came into collision with the Romans for the first time at the beginning of the third century. Caracalla boasted that he had defeated them near Mainz in the summer of the year 213; Dio Cassius says that he bought them off. However that may be, when we hear of the Alamannians again, about fifty years later, they had learned to conquer. Under the Emperor Gallienus (260-268) they broke through the Roman *vallum*, took possession of the *Decumates Agri* on the Neckar and extended their raids across the Rhine into Gaul, and to the south as far as Ravenna. Their advance was checked for a time by Probus (276-282), who hurled them back beyond the Neckar and the Alb and once more closed the *limes* (or Roman fortification lines) against them.<sup>11</sup> Though repeatedly defeated, they returned to the charge with increased numbers and undiminished courage. At the beginning of the fourth century we find them in complete possession of the right bank of the Upper Rhine, from which no efforts of the Romans could dislodge them, the victories of Julian and Valentinian being barely sufficient to keep them from invading Gaul. Gratian (375-383) was the last Roman emperor who attempted to win back the *Decumates Agri*: after defeating the Alamannians at Argentaria, near the present city of Colmar, he crossed the Rhine and advanced into the territory of the Linzgovians. He had, however, hardly withdrawn his army, when the Alamannians crossed the Rhine once more and settled down permanently in what is to-day known as Alsace. About the middle of the fifth century the western part of Vindeliccia, with Augsburg, fell into their hands; and here they came into touch for the first time with organized Christianity. Still it cannot be said that they were influenced by it to any considerable extent. The Arian Goths,

<sup>10</sup> For the Alamanni and the Romans see Ammianus Marcellinus, XVI, ff.; for the conversion of the Alamannians, Hefele, *Einführung des Christentums in S.-W. Deutschland*; Hauck, *K. G. Deutschlands*, I, and Funk in *K. L.*, art. *Alamannen*.

<sup>11</sup> *Vopisc, Vit. Prob., 12 f.*

it seems, made the first converts amongst them, for in the fifth century we hear of an Alamannian prince, Gibuld, who was an Arian.<sup>12</sup> But neither Catholicism nor Arianism made any headway amongst the masses of the people, who clung to their ancestral religion as long as they maintained their national independence.

Towards the end of the fifth century the Alamannians clashed with their western neighbors, the powerful Frankish confederacy. They gained some advantage at first, but Clovis finally decided the struggle for supremacy in favor of the Franks: on the bloody field of Tolbiac (496?) the Alamannian king and the flower of the nation fell: the remnants of the tribe surrendered to Clovis, or sought refuge in the dominions of Theoderic the Great in the mountain fastnesses of Raetia. Theoderic took them under his protection, and Clovis refrained from pursuing his victory any further. In 536 Vitigis ceded Gothic Alamannia to Theodebert I of Austrasia. From that time forward Alamannia, which included, roughly speaking, Alsace, Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria as far as the Lech and the greater part of Switzerland, followed the fortunes of the Franks.

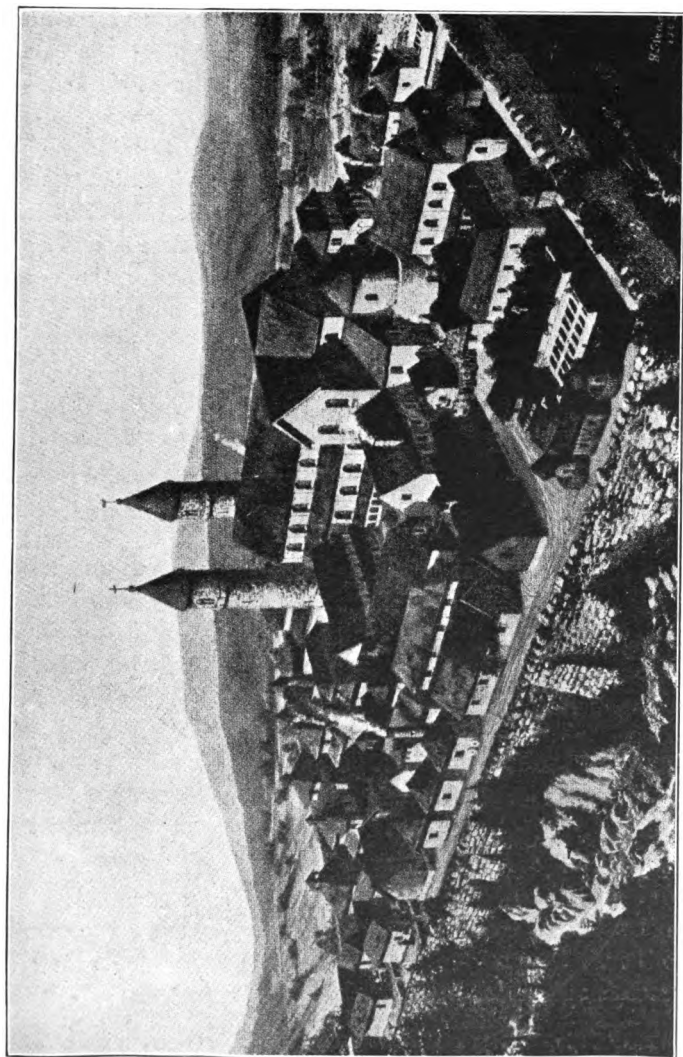
When the Franks defeated the Alamannians, both nations were pagan; but while Tolbiac led the Franks to the true religion, nearly two hundred years elapsed before their rivals were completely Christianized. This tardy acceptance of the Christian faith was due partly to their native fierceness of disposition<sup>13</sup> and their obstinate adherence<sup>14</sup> to their own language, customs, and laws—they were the only German tribe of all those that broke in upon the Roman empire no branch of which was even Latinized—partly to the fact that their conquerors permitted them to retain their ancient laws as well as their ancient worship.

In his *Continuation of Procopius*, the Byzantine historian Agathias, who died in the year 582, calls the Alamannians pagans, and says that they venerated trees, water courses, mountain peaks and ravines, and sacrificed horses, oxen and

<sup>12</sup> Eugippius, *Vit. Severini*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Ammianus calls them "immanis natio" (28:5, 9).

<sup>14</sup> Sidonius Apoll. (Carm., V, 375), speaks of the "Trux Alamannus".



MONASTERY OF ST. GALL  
IX CENTURY



## OLDEST PORTRAIT OF ST. GALL

### IVORY OF TUTILO, IX CENTURY

CENTRAL PANEL DEPICTS THE ASSUMPTION B. V. M. THE LOWEST PANEL  
SHOWS TWO SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ST. GALL. ON THE RIGHT,  
ST. GALL GIVES A PIECE OF BREAD TO A BEAR; AND ON THE LEFT THE  
BEAR BRINGS WOOD AT THE COMMAND OF THE SAINT.

other animals to their gods.<sup>15</sup> On their expedition into Italy under Theodebert I, they everywhere plundered the churches, while the Franks, who were already Christians, spared them.<sup>16</sup> The same writer testifies, however, that the "saner portion of the nation" had already adopted the faith of their rulers, and expresses the hope that before long the masses of the people would follow their example.<sup>17</sup>

Though we hear of very little direct missionary work among the Alamannians before the coming of the Celts,<sup>18</sup> there was no lack of influences which brought them into ever closer contact with Christianity and prepared the way for their ultimate conversion. In the East the bishopric of Augsburg had survived the Alamannian conquest; in northern Switzerland the succession of bishops had not been interrupted since the Roman times in Augst and Windisch, and in the south we hear of bishops of Chur long after the withdrawal of the Roman legions. From the life of St. Gall we know the Christian Romans lived side by side with pagan Germans on the Lake of Constance. In the second half of the sixth century the see of Windisch was transferred to Constance, and that of Augst to Basel. About the same time the ancient Argentoratum, which had been demolished by the Alamannians, was rebuilt as Strassburg and raised to the dignity of an episcopal city, whose first bishops, St. Arbogast and St. Ansoald, were either Franks or Alamannians. The existence of these sees shows that the number of Christians in those parts must have been quite large, but whether any considerable percentage of them were Alamannians, it is impossible to say. In the oldest portion of the *Lex Alamannorum*, the so-called *Pactus* (sixth century), there is but a single mention of Christianity, while the prevalence of paganism is evidenced by the form of oath prescribed for the warriors.

<sup>15</sup> Agathias, *Hist.*, I, 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 7.

<sup>18</sup> It is impossible to say when St. Fridolin came to Alamannia. The earliest mention of the monastery of Säckingen, supposed to have been founded by him, occurs in a document of Charles III of the year 878. Both Fridolin and Thrudpert, who founded the monastery named after him in the Breisgau, were probably Celts. The biography of St. Fridolin was written in the eleventh century; that of St. Thrudpert in 815, on the occasion of the translation of his relics.



Another important factor in the conversion of the Alamannians were the royal estates, or villas,<sup>19</sup> scattered in great numbers over the country and administered by Christian Franks. Christian chapels, usually dedicated to St. Martin or St. Hilary, arose on these estates, and Frankish peasants were encouraged to settle in the neighborhood. In time these agricultural colonies developed into villages, parishes, towns, cities, bishoprics. The Alamannian dukes and counts also had their farmsteads, often side by side with those of the Franks, and with the conversion of their owners these too became centres of Christian civilization. The Alamannian nobles were all the more inclined to adopt the religion of their overlords as these made no secret of their aversion to pagans and paganism.<sup>20</sup> Duke Gunzo, in whose territory Columban settled down, was a Christian, and some years later we hear of a Frankish count who had taken to wife Framehilde, a saintly Alamannian princess. But if mutual intercourse brought about conversions to Christianity, it also had, in not a few cases, the contrary effect of causing Christians to relapse into paganism or religious indifference, as we shall see in the course of this narrative.

Thus we see that, although Christianity had gained a foothold in many parts of southwestern Germany and Switzerland at the beginning of the seventh century, the masses of the people were still sunk in all the horrors of idolatry. It was the giant task of Columban and Gall and their heroic followers to bring them back.

“ From the impious worship that seduced the world ” and to implant deep in their hearts

Lo nome de colui, che in terra adusse  
la verità che tanto ci sublima—

The name of Him who brought upon the earth  
The truth that so much sublimateth us.

—Dante, *Parad.*, XXII, 41 f.

<sup>19</sup> Also called *curtes*. A *curtis* according to Du Cange, is a “ villa, habitatio rustice, aedificiis, servis, agris ac ad rem agrestem necessariis instructa ”. (*Curis* derived from *Cors*, old Frankish for farmstead.)

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Fred.*, IV, 68.

## II.

### IN THE HEART OF SWITZERLAND.

AFTER many days of weary rowing Columban and his party reached Basel, or Basilea, as it was called in those days, which had become an episcopal see some twelve years previously. Here, according to an ancient tradition, Ursicinus bade farewell to his beloved master and, penetrating into the passes of the Jura, built a hermitage on the banks of the Doubs, in a wild and picturesque gorge at the foot of Mont Terrible, which afterwards grew into the abbey and town of St. Ursanne. The rest continued their journey up the Rhine, pausing no doubt to gaze on the lovely little island of Säckingen, with which the name of another great Irish missionary, St. Fridolin, was to be so inseparably associated in after times.

For some reason or other, instead of going on to Lake Constance, as they had at first intended to do, the pilgrims left the Rhine at Waldshut, and ascended the Aare and the Limmat till they came to Zürich.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient fortress of Turegum had been a place of no mean importance in Roman times, standing as it did on the great road that led from Italy over the Septimerberg to Gaul and Germany. But when Columban arrived there its temples and public buildings were a heap of unsightly ruins overgrown with weeds and brushwood. The long-neglected high-road was a marshy meadow, and the forest had encroached on the very streets and squares of the town. Forests, too, covered the Albis and the valleys of the Sihl and the Limmat. The interminable wars, in which the Romans had fallen before the sturdy Alamans, and these, in their turn, before the sturdier Franks, had depopulated the land, and turned the smiling fields and Alpine pasture-lands into an inhospitable wilder-

<sup>1</sup> For the events related to this chapter see the *Vita S. Galli* of Wettinus and Walahfried Strabo (*M. G. SS. Rer. Merov.*, IV, 229 ff.).

ness. Scattered hamlets and homesteads had replaced the Roman towns and villas, and the remnants of the former inhabitants, reduced to poverty or serfdom, were being gradually absorbed by the conquerors.

Still, the sight that greeted the eyes of the nature-loving Celts, as their boats emerged from the forest gloom into the broad, crystal-clear expanse of the Lake of Zürich, lying so calm and peaceful among the gently rising ridges of hills, with the glacier-covered giants of the Alpine world shining like silver in the distance, was one of surpassing beauty. It was Columban's first view of the Alps, those

Palaces of Nature, whose vast walls  
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,  
And throned Eternity in icy halls  
Of cold sublimity,

and we can imagine how his heart beat higher at the sight, and how his lips broke out into the song of praise: "Benedicite glacies et nives Domino, laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula: Benedicite montes et colles Domino, laudate et superexaltate eum in saecula."—"O ye ice and snow, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all forever. O ye mountains and hills, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all forever!"

When Xerxes hesitated to invade Europe, Mardonios won him over at last by constantly reminding him that the Great King alone was worthy to possess a land of such wondrous beauty and fertility. If Columban had entertained any doubts as to whether he should attempt the spiritual conquest of Helvetia, they were dispelled during that hour of silent contemplation of "the work divine, the blending of all beauties", spread out before him: who but the Great King of Heaven Himself deserved to rule over this masterpiece of His creation? Perhaps he saw in spirit how Christianity and civilization would transform the scene—the shores of the lake dotted with orchards and vineyards; thriving towns and villages nestling in the pleasant valleys or clinging to the verdant hill-sides, with the protecting arms of the Cross of the Redeemer stretched out above them; and on Sunday mornings the harmonious music of a hundred church-bells answering each other from shore to shore, from hill to hill.

After a brief rest at Zürich, the monks entered their boats once more and rowed along the left bank of the lake till they reached its southern extremity, a distance of about twenty-five miles. Attracted by the fertility of the soil and the mildness of the climate, the Alamannians had settled on the banks of the Linth and in the neighboring Wäggital in great numbers. Tuggen,<sup>2</sup> their most important settlement, stood on the water's edge in those days, but the lake gradually receded and the village is now nearly two miles distant from the shore.

The place pleased Columban, says Walahfried Strabo, but not the manners of the inhabitants; for, though there appear to have been some Christians amongst them, pagan superstitions still reigned supreme. Christians and heathens alike offered sacrifice to the old Teutonic gods in the sacred groves, and gave themselves up to divination, sorcery, and other diabolical practices. Here was an ample field for the zeal of the missionaries, and no sooner had they constructed their little cells on the hill-side, than they set to work with characteristic Celtic impetuosity to cultivate it.

Gall took an especially prominent part in the mission, and his ability to preach to the people in their own tongue seems to have made him the spokesman of the party. He instructed the rude peasants and herdsmen in the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, taught them to adore the Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and called upon them to destroy their idols and their fanes. When they continued, in spite of his exhortations, to practise their idolatrous rites, his zeal for the honor of the true God got the better of his prudence: he set fire to their place of worship and threw the offerings of the worshippers into the lake. By this bold proceeding the indifference of the inhabitants was turned into the fiercest hatred. A meeting of the freemen was hastily summoned, and it was resolved to wreak vengeance on the strangers: Gall was to be put to death and Columban was to be beaten with rods.

Forewarned of the murderous designs of the pagans, Columban, mindful of the advice of the Apostles, to "give place to wrath", prepared to leave those parts without delay. But

<sup>2</sup> A village in the Canton of Schwyz at the foot of the Buchberg.

before turning his back upon the ungrateful people, he called down the wrath of Heaven upon them in the words of the Psalmist: "My enemies repaid me with evil for good, and hatred for my love. May their posterity be cut off; in one generation may their names be blotted out. They loved cursing, and it shall come unto them; and they would not have blessing, and it shall be far from them. Their mischief shall return upon their own heads, and their iniquities shall come down upon their own crowns."<sup>3</sup>

After crossing the Linth the missionaries abandoned their boats and proceeded in a northeasterly direction, following as much as possible the course of the Thur, till they came to Arbon, an ancient Roman *castrum* on the southern shore of Lake Constance. Here they received the most hearty and fraternal welcome from Willimar, the parish priest, and his two Deacons. "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; the Lord is God and He hath shone upon us," the good priest cried out, when he saw Columban approaching. And the Abbot replied: "From far countries the Lord hath gathered us." The travelers remained at Arbon seven days, resting their weary limbs from the fatigues of the long march, and refreshing themselves and their host with sweet and pious conversations. One evening while at their frugal meal, Gall, at the request of his master, read a passage from Holy Writ and expounded the meaning of the sacred text so admirably and filled the hearts of his hearers with such love of the Heavenly Country that all were deeply moved, and Willimar could not restrain his tears.

The pastoral needs of Arbon being sufficiently provided for, it was useless for Columban to think of remaining there. On inquiry he learned from his host that not far from there were the ruins of the old town of Brigantium, which offered an ideal site for a monastic settlement such as he contemplated. The land was fertile, his informant added, producing all manner

<sup>3</sup> Pss. 7, 82, 108. "Tradition consistently represents St. Patrick as finding in malediction an instrument not to be disdained. He curses men and even inanimate things which incur his displeasure. While he was at Nisnech, in southwestern Meath, a grandson of Niall slew some of his foreign companions. Patrick cursed both this man and Coirpre, a son of Niall, who had attempted the life of Patrick himself at Tailte. (Bury, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 204, 120-121.) Ruadan cursed Tara and the dynasty of Dermot MacCearbhal. (Hull, *Early Christian Ireland*, p. 27.)

of fruits and vegetables; the lake and the rivers were well-stocked with fish, and the deep woods which covered the valley and the sides of the lofty mountains afforded the solitude and seclusion he so much desired. Pleased with this description, Columban wished to see the place himself. Willimar placed a boat at his disposal, and with Gall and one of the Arbon deacons for his companions he crossed the lake to Bregenz.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Capital of Vorarlberg, Austria.

### III.

#### COLUMBAN'S SOJOURN IN BREGENZ.

AT the place where the reconnoitering party landed, there stood a little church dedicated to St. Aurelia,<sup>1</sup> a relic, no doubt, of the days before the Wandering of the Peoples, when Christianity, under the protection of the Christian emperors began to take root in the Roman colonies of Rhaetia. Here was a chapel providentially placed at his disposal, thought Columban, and he resolved to plant the first monastic foundation on Alamannian soil within its shadow. Looking around him, he had to confess that Willimar had not exaggerated the beauty and manifold advantages of the site. To the East the wooded crags of the Pfänder rose three thousand feet into the blue sky; to the South the valley of the Upper Rhine lay smiling and contented though forever frowned down upon by the sombre peaks of the Bregenzer Wald on the one side, and the Säntis Group of the Glarner Alps on the other; and to the West, as far as the eye could see, extended the clear, placid surface of the great lake.

But in order to obtain a perfect view of the region that was to be the scene of Columban's labors for the next two years, we must climb to the ruins of the old castle of Hohen-Bregenz on the Gebhardsberg. River, lake, and mountains are focussed into a single picture of indescribable beauty. The valley of the Rhine and the beautiful waters of Lake Constance are spread out, like the wings of some giant eagle, between the mountains. The eye would fain drink in the whole scene at one glance, and yet it is irresistibly attracted to each of its component parts. The whole is so beautiful, because all its parts are beautiful.

<sup>1</sup> The identity of St. Aurelia is a matter of dispute amongst hagiographers and ecclesiastical writers. According to some she died in the fourth century in the neighborhood of Strassburg. There was a very ancient church of St. Aurelia in that city, which was destroyed by the Protestants in 1524. St. Aurelia is also venerated in Rome and Anagni, which makes it more than probable that she was a Roman or Italian saint.

After the rest of the party had been sent for from Arbon, work was immediately begun on the new monastery. The little cells were soon constructed, and spaces cleared in the forest for fields and gardens. Although the church of St. Aurelia stood on fiscal ground and was therefore included in the grant made by Theodebert to Columban, the missionaries did not get possession of it without a struggle.

In the church itself, or in its immediate vicinity, there were three statues of gilded metal, which were held in much veneration by the people. "These are the gods of our nation, our tutelar spirits," they told the monks; "they have provided us and our forefathers with rain and sunshine: to their mercy and goodness we owe all we possess: they rule well." On certain days they gathered about them, offering them gifts and sacrifices. One of these festivals was celebrated shortly after the arrival of the monastic colony. The attendance was larger than usual, for all were desirous of seeing the strangers who had so unceremoniously taken possession of their ancient place of worship. The idols were still in their accustomed places, and this reassured them. But what was their surprise and amazement when one of the monks stood up and, addressing them in their own language—the preacher was Gall—told them of God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, who came down from Heaven to redeem sinful man by His death on the Cross; denounced the vanity of their idols, admonished them to turn with their whole heart to the worship of the true God, and, suiting the action to the word, overturned the statues and hurled them into the lake.

Many of those who witnessed this striking proof of the utter helplessness of their gods believed and asked to be baptized; others went away greatly incensed and muttering threats of vengeance against the profaners of their sanctuary. Columban ordered water to be brought, blessed it, aspersed the desecrated chapel with it, and with prayers and sacred hymns consecrated it once more to the service of God. To crown the joy of this day, many renegade Christians came to do penance for their sins, and promised to live henceforth more conformably to the precepts of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Vita S. Galli*, 7.



The early days of Luxeuil were renewed in Bregenz. The biographer of St. Gall compares the life of the monks to that of ever-busy bees: <sup>3</sup> they prayed and sang the holy office, and on Sundays and feast days celebrated the Sacred Mysteries with all possible splendor in the little church; they tilled the fields, planted fruit trees in the meadows, and dragged lake and mountain stream for fish. The sick and the poor soon found the way to the monastery gate, and none came in vain.

Gall was soon as familiar with the Rhine and the Lake of Constance as he had been with the Breuchin and the Lanterne in the Vosges. He knew where the finny tribe loved to gather, and during the first months of their sojourn in Bregenz the Brethren were chiefly supplied with food by his labor. One night, when he had rowed farther out on the lake than usual, he heard in the stillness the voice of the demon of the mountains crying from the heights to the demon of the lake, bidding him arise and help to expel the strangers who were casting down their altars. The lake demon answered that one of them was even then troubling him, but he had no power to break his nets or to do him harm, because he never slept and was forever calling on a divine name. When Gall heard these voices, he adjured the demons by the Name of the Lord, and hastened to tell the Abbot, who at once rang the bell <sup>4</sup> to summon the Brethren to the church. No sooner had they begun to chant the night office, than they heard the terrific sound of voices of demons wailing on the mountain tops.

But clever as Gall was at handling the net and the rod, like all fishermen, he had his periods of ill luck. For weeks at a time he would catch nothing, and then the monks had to be content with berries and wild apples, for the harvest time was still far off and the people of the neighborhood were either too poor or too indifferent to help them. During one of these

<sup>3</sup> *Vit. Galli*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Galli*, 8: "*Solitum signum tangens.*" Signum is the name applied to bells by Gregory of Tours, who is the first writer to mention them. A very ancient bell called the Bell of St. Columban, was preserved in the parish church of Bregenz till 1786, when it was presented to the monastery of St. Gall, where it is still shown. A seventh-century hammered-iron bell, the so-called *Saufang*, is preserved in the Walraf Museum at Cologne. From the Irish word for a bell, *Clog*, according to some comes the German word *Glocke*. In Adamnan's *Vita S. Columbae* we find the expressions: "*Cloccam pulsa*" and "*personante clocca.*" The most famous bell-founder of the eighth century was Tanko, a monk of St. Gall.

periods of enforced fasting and abstinence, a swarm of birds-of-passage alighted in the woods near the monastery, like the quails in the camp of the Israelites in the desert, and were trapped with ease by the monks. "None of the Brethren had ever seen such birds before," Eustace, who was at Bregenz at the time, afterwards told Jonas, "and they proved a delicacy fit for a king's table." Gaudentius, Bishop of Constance, hearing of the distress of the missionaries, ordered a sufficient supply of grain to be sent to them from the neighboring towns to tide them over the winter months. After that their own gardens and fields supplied them with food in abundance.<sup>5</sup>

As at Annegray and Luxeuil, Columban used frequently to betake himself for prayer and penance to a little hermitage he had built for himself under the shelter of a huge rock in the Bregenzer Wald. His only companion on these occasions was Chagnoald, the son of Chagneric, the nobleman who had entertained him so hospitably when flying from the wrath of Brunhilde. Strolling through the forest one day, they came upon a band of Suevi who were assembled around a large vessel filled with beer. Why were they gathered here in the depths of the forest? Columban asked; why this air of mystery and solemnity? what was the meaning of the fire and the kettle and vessel of beer? And on being told that they were preparing to offer sacrifice to Wotan, he upset the vessel with such violence that the hoops burst asunder and all the contents were spilt. Overawed by the kindling eye and the majestic presence of the Abbot, the idolaters dispersed without daring to utter a word of protest. In the case of some it appears that this very summary and emphatic demonstration of the truth of Christianity was more effectual than the longest and most eloquent exposition. At all events, Columban had the consolation of receiving a number of pagans into the Church some time after this adventure.<sup>6</sup>

Though separated by many leagues from his monasteries in Burgundy, Columban kept in constant touch with them. It was probably from Bregenz that he wrote most of the letters in prose and verse to which we have referred above;<sup>7</sup> and the news which he received from Luxeuil, while distressing

<sup>5</sup> *Vit. Col.*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter III, Part II: *The School of Luxeuil.*

at first, became more reassuring as time went on. True, the dispositions he had made in his letter from Nantes for the government of his houses had not been carried out. Waldelenus had refused the responsibility of the provostship, having preferred to become a missionary, and Attala, his designated successor, had either not been approved by the bishops and the Court, or had resigned the abbatial dignity of his own accord in order to share the fortunes of his master in exile. On the other hand, Theoderic and Brunhilde, as soon as the Celtic trouble-makers, as they called them, had departed, had taken Luxeuil into favor once more,<sup>8</sup> and agreed to Eustace's appointment as abbot.<sup>9</sup> Columban was loath to lose the companionship of his faithful disciple, but in the interests of his beloved foundations he cheerfully made the sacrifice. Eustace repaid the confidence reposed in him by manfully upholding the Columbanian traditions in the monasteries over which he ruled.

The good tidings from Burgundy were offset by rumors of a hostile movement among the influential pagans of Bregenz. They could not forgive the ignominious treatment their gods had met with at the hands of the strangers, and, when occasion offered, made them feel their displeasure. One night they broke into the stable of the monastery, stole one of the cows and drove her off into the mountains. Two monks, who went in search of the animal on the following morning, believing it to have strayed away of its own accord, were waylaid and slain.<sup>10</sup> In order to extenuate their crime, the murderers hurried to Ueberlingen, where the Duke of Alamannia resided, and accused the monks of trespassing on their hunting grounds and frightening away the game. Cunzo was disposed to espouse the quarrel of his countrymen and to proceed against Columban. But about this time an event occurred which made all interference on his part superfluous, bringing about as it did the disruption of the thriving little monastic settlement in Bregenz.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Vita Agili*, 7, 8. (Mabillon, *A. SS. O. S. B.*, II, 305.)

<sup>9</sup> The *Vita Walarici*, c. 10, says that Eustace was appointed by Columban, but this is an erroneous conclusion from *Vit. Col.*, II, 7, for, according to *Vita Col.*, I, 30, Eustace was already Abbot of Luxeuil when he undertook his journey to Italy at the request of Chlothar II.

<sup>10</sup> *Vit. S. Galli*, 9.

#### IV.

##### “ NO ABIDING CITY.”

**A**BOUT two years had passed by since the arrival of the exiles at Bregenz, when Columban, to the surprise of all the Brethren, suddenly seized his scrip and staff and set out for Metz. Rumors of an impending war between Theoderic and Theodebert had reached him and, fearing the worst for his kind protector, he was determined to warn him of the approaching catastrophe, and to counsel him to look to his soul; for Theodebert had committed a great crime since Columban had been at his court, having in a fit of passion killed his wife Bilichildis and married a young girl named Theudichildis.<sup>1</sup> He must be brought to his senses, the Abbot said to himself, and made to do penance before it is too late.

Theodebert was rejoiced to see his saintly friend again, but when Columban told him to give up his kingdom and become a monk, if he did not wish to lose the heavenly inheritance together with his earthly crown, he and his courtiers laughed him to scorn. “ Father Abbot, you must be mad,” they said; “ who ever heard of a Merovingian king of his own free will stepping down from his throne and shutting himself up in a cloister? ”—“ Well, if the king does not become a monk of his own free will, he will soon become one by force,” Columban calmly replied, and, seeing that further insistence would be of no avail, returned to his cell on Lake Constance, where he continued to pray for the conversion of his benefactor.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of the year 612, the seventeenth of his reign, Theoderic, having secured a promise of neutrality from Chlothar of Neustria, mustered a mighty army from all the provinces of his kingdom at Langres on the Marne. From here he marched northeastward, taking possession of the towns that lay between him and his rival. The first fortress that opposed

<sup>1</sup> Fredegar, *Chron.*, IV, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 28.

any serious resistance was Toul. It was quickly invested and forced to open its gates. While Theoderic was thus employed, Theodebert advanced with a considerable force to oppose him. The two armies met on the great wold before Toul: Theodebert was defeated and thousands of his bravest warriors were slain; he himself fled over Metz to Cologne. Here he succeeded in collecting a new army, composed for the most part of Saxons, Thuringians and other peoples from beyond the Rhine, with which he hoped to retrieve the disaster of Toul.

In the meantime, Theoderic had crossed the forest of Ardennes and pitched his camp near the old town of Tolbiac, or Zülpich, midway between Bonn and Aix-la-Chapelle. Here, where a hundred years before Frank and Alaman had struggled so fiercely for the inheritance of Roman Gaul and Germany, the brothers faced each other again, and one of the bloodiest battles in Frankish annals was fought. Theoderic was again victorious, and from Tolbiac to Cologne Theodebert's soldiers, cut down by the relentless pursuers, strewed the ground. On the same day Theoderic entered Cologne, seized his brother's treasure and ordered his little son, Meroveus, to be put to death. Theodebert, who had fled across the Rhine with a handful of followers, was overtaken by Count Berthar, Theoderic's chamberlain, stripped of all the insignia of royalty, and sent in chains to Chalon. Brunhilde had her revenge at last, and Columban's prediction was fulfilled to the letter; for the implacable woman thrust her grandson into a monastery, and soon after delivered him to the executioner. Pushing on to Metz, Theoderic enjoyed there for a few months the triumph of his bloody victory.<sup>3</sup>

Whilst the brothers were engaged in deadly combat on the plain of Tolbiac, Columban was seated on the trunk of a tree near his hermitage, reading in a book. But he could not apply himself with his usual ardor to the text before him, for his mind was preoccupied with the issue of the fratricidal war. The weather was sultry, and he insensibly fell asleep. On awakening, he called his attendant Chagnoald to his side, "In my sleep," he said, "I saw furious troops joined in battle, and blood shed like water."—"Father," suggested Chagnoald,

<sup>3</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 28; *Fredegar, Chron.*, IV, 38, 42.

"pray for Theodebert; obtain the victory for him over Theoderic, our common enemy."—"Your counsel, my son, is rash and foolish," the Abbot replied, "and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel; for our Divine Master commands us to pray for our enemies: the fate of Theodebert is in the keeping of the Just Judge."<sup>4</sup>

By the victory of Tolbiac all Austrasia and Alamannia fell into the hands of Theoderic and Brunhilde, and Columban knew that he must leave the beautiful valley of Bregenz and seek another home. "We have found a golden cup," he said to his monks, but it is full of serpents. The God whom we serve will lead us elsewhere." At first he thought of preaching the Gospel to the Wends, a tribe of Slavs who had recently extended their conquests as far as the Thuringian Forest. But a vision diverted him from this purpose: an angel of the Lord, says Jonas, appeared to him in his sleep and, unrolling a map of the world before his eyes, said: "Thou seest the whole earth before thee. Go to the right hand or to the left, as thou chooseth; only see to it that thou taste the fruit of thy labor." Taking this to be a sign that the nations dwelling to the East were not yet ready to receive the Gospel and were to be left to other missionaries, he resolved to carry out his original plan of passing on to Italy.<sup>5</sup>

On the day fixed for the departure, Gall was attacked by a violent fever and, throwing himself at the feet of his master, asked permission to remain behind. He had become attached to Bregenz and its people; he was acquainted with their language and their manner of life, and he hoped in time to reap a rich harvest of souls amongst them. Under these circumstances it was quite natural that he should regard the malady which had so suddenly befallen him as the expression of the will of God in his regard. But Columban, accustomed as he was to command and to be obeyed unhesitatingly, would listen to no excuses from his subordinate. Had he not enjoined in his Rule that "at the first word of the superior all must rise to obey, because by obeying him they obey God?" And again: "The true disciple of Christ must obey in all things; no matter how hard or distasteful the task laid upon him may be, he must

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 28.

set about its fulfillment with zeal and joy, because only such obedience is acceptable to the Lord?" To withdraw oneself from this obligation was in his eyes a deplorable weakness, which must be visited with severe punishment. Nor did the fact that the closest bonds of friendship united him with the culprit, that they had dwelt together in Bangor and worked and suffered together for twenty-five years since they had left their native land, deter him from inflicting it on the spot. "You do not wish to share the hardships of this pilgrimage with me," he said to him. "Have your will then and remain here; but I command you not to presume to celebrate Mass whilst I live." Gall humbly accepted the penance imposed on him, and taking leave of his master returned to his cell.<sup>6</sup>

Taking with him Attala and Sigisbert and perhaps one or two other monks, Columban set out on his long and wearisome journey across the Alps. In all probability he followed the route over the Rhaetian Septimerberg, as that was the nearest and at the same time the most frequented in those days. At Chur, Sigisbert parted from him and made his way over mountain passes and fields of eternal ice till he came to the junction of the Middle and the Further Rhine. Here, in a "desert land,"<sup>7</sup> in a place of horror, and of vast wilderness", he built a little hermitage of staves and twigs, and taught the half-civilized Rhaetians the truths of Christianity and the arts of peace. The work of conversion progressed, disciples gathered around him, and the humble cell was soon replaced by a monastery dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Such was the first foundation of the celebrated abbey of Disentis.<sup>8</sup>

Brief as Columban's missionary work among the Alamanians had been, it was by no means fruitless. His strong personality had made a deep and lasting impression on the people. The inhabitants of the Urserental did not forget that

<sup>6</sup> *Vit. Galli*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> *Desertina* is the Latin name of Disentis, the village and abbey found by St. Sigisbert. The cult of St. Sigisbert was approved in 1906 (*Analect. Eccl.*, Vol. XIV, p. 22).

<sup>8</sup> The abbey of Disentis is mentioned in documents of the eighth century. It was visited by Charles Martell, Pepin, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, and by St. Charles Borromeo. The abbey with its valuable collection of MSS. was burned by the French in 1799. Since 1880 it has regained to some extent its former importance.

their apostle, Sigisbert, was a disciple of Columban, and two hundred years after the great abbot's death they erected a church in his honor at the foot of the St. Gotthard. At Wangen, in the Canton of Thurgau, there was also a church dedicated to him, and tradition spoke of his having tarried there on his way to Lake Constance. For the development of the Church in Germany it was of the highest importance that Columban brought Luxeuil into connexion with Alamannia. Bertinus, the famous abbot of Sithiu, whose home was in Constance, was a boy of eleven or twelve years when Columban sojourned in those parts, and it was no doubt due to the latter's influence that he afterwards made up his mind to become a monk in Luxeuil. Of no less importance was the fact that Eustace shared Columban's labors in Bregenz. He thus learned to appreciate the necessity of missionary work among the pagan Germans, and when he became abbot, he converted Luxeuil into a mission seminary.

But the greatest benefit by far conferred on the Alamanian lands by Columban was the gift, though unwillingly given, of his ablest disciple, St. Gall. After the departure of his master, Gall rowed across the lake to Arbon, where he was nursed back to health by Willimar and his clerics, Maginald and Theodore. Not wishing to return to the deserted cloister at Bregenz,<sup>9</sup> he set out with the deacon Hiltibod to explore the forest of Arbon for a suitable place in which to build a hermitage. Towards evening they broke their fast on the banks of a little mountain stream. The utter solitude of the place, the abundance of water—the Steinach, pausing for a moment in its mad rush, had formed a deep basin in the solid rock at his feet—pleased Gall, and the bears and wolves and wild boars that had made the forest their home did not inspire him with fear. "This is my rest for ever and ever," he said to his companion: "here will I dwell in the place of my choice." And making a cross of twigs, he hung his casket of relics on it and, while Hiltibod slept, poured out his soul in prayer to God to

<sup>9</sup> The abbey of Mehrerau (Augia Major) afterwards arose on the site once occupied by the chapel of St. Aurelia and the cells of St. Columban and his monks. Mehrerau is at present a Cistercian monastery and college. In 1734 the Holy See granted Mehrerau the privilege of celebrating the feast of St. Columban as a double of the first class with octave, together with a plenary indulgence, under the usual terms, for such as visited the monastery church.



draw down His blessing on the work he was about to inaugurate.

He was joined after some time by Maginald and Theodore of Arbon, John, a deacon of Chur, and nine other disciples. With immense labor they rooted up trees, leveled the ground, and raised some crops. The rude huts were improved and a neat little chapel was erected. Here they sang the divine praises and instructed the people who came to them. From time to time they quitted their solitude to preach in the villages and hamlets of Appenzell and Toggenburg. The wild beasts, says the legend, tendered their services to the men of God; snakes and other reptiles retired farther into the mountains; the demons, uttering lamentations and threats against the invaders of their ancient haunts, took to flight, and the water sprites, frightened by the ringing of the chapel bell, plunged headlong into the mountain streams and were seen no more by mortals. What else do these legends tell us except that the valleys and mountain sides became the seats of culture, and that wherever the Cross is planted the power of the rulers of the world of darkness is broken forever?

When Martian, the successor of Gaudentius in the See of Constance, died in 616, clergy and people desired to have Gall for their bishop. But he refused the proffered dignity on the plea that he was a pilgrim and a stranger in the land,<sup>10</sup> and proposed the election of his disciple, John, who was their countryman and in every way worthy to bear the honors and the responsibilities of the episcopacy. Thereupon John was unanimously elected and forthwith consecrated by the bishops of Basel and Speyer, Gall bringing the joyous solemnity to a close with an edifying and instructive discourse, the substance of which has come down to us.<sup>11</sup>

Some years later another attempt was made to take Gall from his beloved cell. St. Eustace, Columban's successor in Luxeuil, died 2 April, 629. The monks were determined to have Gall for their abbot and sent a deputation to him to acquaint him with their wishes. But he was an old man of four-

<sup>10</sup> Several Frankish synods decreed that no foreigners should be elected to bishoprics in the Frankish dominions. (Hefele, *Conciliengeschichte*, III, 73.)

<sup>11</sup> Canisius, *Lect. Antiq.*, V, 693.

score years now, and dear as Luxeuil was to his heart, he felt that the task of governing so large a community was beyond his strength. "There was a time," he said, "when I should have gladly responded to such a call; but those days are long passed, and I am determined to spend the rest of my life in this solitude." So the envoys returned to Luxeuil, "sad at heart because they had not effected their object, yet rejoicing because it had been their good fortune to be the guests of so great a saint of God".<sup>12</sup>

After this Gall left his cell but seldom; the last time on the Feast of St. Michael, in 641 or 645,<sup>13</sup> to preach in the church of Arbon, of which his old friend Willimar was still pastor. Here he fell sick, and after a short illness died on the sixteenth of October, in the ninety-fifth year of his age. Bishop John of Constance celebrated the Requiem Mass in Arbon before a large concourse of people, and then had the holy remains transferred to the little church on the Steinach, where he laid them to rest "between the altar and the wall". Here St. Gall still rests, on the very spot where, thirteen hundred years ago, he had planted the rude cross of twigs.<sup>14</sup> And with the old hymnist we pray that he may win favor for us in the sight of God, and that the "place of his body may ever be filled with the peace of Christ":

Te nunc suppliciter precamur,  
ut nobis Jhesum Christum, Galle,  
postules favere,

Et locum corporis  
ejus pace repleas

Ac tuos supplices  
crebra prece subleves,

<sup>12</sup> *Vit. S. Galli*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> According to some catalogues of the bishops of Constance, John died in 642; in this case, as John presided at the funeral of St. Gall, the date of the latter's death would be 641.

<sup>14</sup> Before the middle of the eighth century a monastery was erected near the church of St. Gall; St. Othmar was its first abbot. Such were the beginnings of the famous abbey of St. Gall. The old abbey church is at present the cathedral church of the bishops of St. Gall.

Ut tibi debitam  
honorificentiam

Laetabundi semper  
Mereamur solvere.

O Galle, Deo dilecte.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> This beautiful *troparion* is contained in a twelfth-century missal of the monastery of Murbach, now in Colmar in Alsace. The famous Notker of St. Gall also wrote a *troparion* entitled "In festivitatem S. Galli. Dies sanctificatus." Both hymns published by Mone, *Lat. Hymnen des Mittelalters*, p. 310 f.

**PART IV.**  
**IN THE KINGDOM OF THE LOMBARDS.**



## I.

### AT THE LOMBARD COURT.

**A**BOUT fifty years before Columban's arrival in Italy the last wave of the *Völkerwanderung*—the Migration of the Nations—had swept over the Peninsula. The story of the Lombard conquest is a story of blood and iron. The pages of Paul Warnefrid,<sup>1</sup> the historian of the Lombards, read at times like fragments of an epic poem, so full are they of deeds of prowess and wanton bloodshed, of crime and vengeance.

When we hear of the Lombards (Langobards) for the first time in the reign of Augustus, they had their seats on the lower Elbe, south of the Angles and Saxons and southwest of the Vandals, and formed part of the confederacy of German tribes known as the kingdom of Marbod. Moving southward in the fourth century, they were subjected by the Huns and regained their independence only after the death of Attila. At the beginning of the sixth century they settled on the Danube, in what is now Lower Austria; and a little later we find them, under King Audoin, south of the Middle Danube on lands given to them by Justinian. During the long and bloody wars for the possession of Rome between the Goths and the Byzantines thousands of Lombards fought in the armies of Belisarius and Narses against Totila and Teias, and their glowing accounts of the beauty and fertility of Italy ripened in Alboin, Audoin's successor, the long-cherished plan of possessing himself of the Pearl of the Empire.

The immediate occasion of the Lombard invasion is said to have been an invitation extended to Alboin by Narses, who,

<sup>1</sup> Paulus Diaconus, son of Warnefrid, was born in Friuli about 720 and died 13 April, 799. In 774 he became monk in Monte Cassino. In 782, at the Court of Charles the Great, where he wrote his "History of the Bishops of Metz." In 787 he was again in Monte Cassino. Here he wrote his "Commen. of the Rule of St. Benedict," his "Homiliarium" and his valuable "Historia Gentis Langobardorum." (Best edition of his works in *Mon. Ger. Hist. SS. Rerum Langob., Poetae Lat. aevi Carol.*, I, and *Epistolae*, IV.)

enraged at the appointment of a new Exarch, had resolved to make the hardy warriors of Pannonia the instruments of his vengeance. However that may be, in the year 568, after defeating his eastern neighbors, the Gepidae, so decisively that nothing but the name of this once mighty nation survived, Alboin was ready to descend upon Italy.

Through the passes of the Carnian Alps poured the sheer countless throng: men, women and children, wagons loaded with household utensils, provisions and arms, the whole surrounded by troops of well-mounted horsemen. The dress of the men consisted of long loosely-fitting linen garments edged with strips of colored cloth. Their shoes were of untanned leather, open almost to the toes, and fastened with leathern strings. At the back of the head the hair was closely clipped; in front it was parted in the middle and fell down in disorderly masses over the cheeks to the mouth.<sup>2</sup>

During the march to the Alps the Lombard hordes had been constantly swelled by numerous adventurers from other tribes: Bulgars, Sarmatians, Sueves, Pannonians, Noricans, remnants of the Gepids, and twenty thousand Saxons, "old friends of Alboin", as Paul the Deacon calls them, with their wives and children. The inhabitants of Venetia and Friuli took refuge in the walled cities or fled to the sea-shore, some to Genoa, others to Ravenna, others to the marshy islands where Venice now stands. The bishop of Aquileia escaped with the treasure of his cathedral to the rocky island of Grado. Padua, Monselice and Mantua were the only Venetian cities that refused to open their gates to the invaders. Milan was taken in 569, and siege laid to Pavia (Ticinum), which had been strongly fortified by the Goths; when it fell at last, in 571, Alboin fixed his seat there. Longinus, the Byzantine Prefect of Italy, deserted by the Emperor, could offer no effectual resistance, and Alboin's warriors pushed southward, ravaging the country to the very walls of Rome and Naples. To make the horrors of war complete, famine and disease stalked through the land in the van and the wake of the conquerors.

But Alboin did not long enjoy the fruits of his victories. He was married to Rosamunde, the daughter of Kunimund,

<sup>2</sup> Paulus Diac., IV, 22.

king of the Gepids, whom he had slain with his own hand in the great battle referred to above. At a banquet in Verona, when he had drunk more deeply than usual of the hot Italian wine, he commanded Rosamunde to drink with him out of the goblet which he had made from her father's skull. The horrid jest cost him dear. By promising him her hand, Rosamunde prevailed on Helwigis, an influential nobleman, to murder Alboin (572). Helwigis hoped to obtain the crown; but the Lombards, exasperated by the death of their heroic king, sought to kill him. Under cover of night he fled with Rosamunde and the royal treasure to Ravenna. Here Rosamunde proved faithless to him: Longinus offered to share the Exarchal throne with her, and she accepted his proposal. To rid herself of Helwigis, she gave him a cup of poisoned wine to drink; but he, as soon as he became aware that he was drinking of the goblet of death, drew his sword and forced the wretched woman to drain the rest of the cup to the dregs. "Thus," says the historian, "by the judgment of the Almighty these two foul murderers died in one and the same hour".<sup>3</sup>

Kleph, Alboin's successor (572-575), extended the Lombard conquests in the south, and before long nothing was left to the Byzantines but Rome with the Romagna in the North and the Campagna in the South, Naples, the southern end of Calabria, the Ligurian coast with Genoa, Venice, part of Istria, and Ravenna with the adjacent territory. For ten years after the death of Kleph the Lombards remained without a king, thirty-five dukes dividing the government between them. During this period of practical anarchy, Italy's cup of woe was filled to the brim and the Goths were amply revenged for the fickleness and faithlessness of the Italians. War and the chase were the occupations of the new masters of Italy, to whom the Romans had to deliver one-third of the produce of their lands. The wealthier landowners were dispossessed, banished, or put to the sword; churches were plundered, priests murdered, whole towns destroyed and the inhabitants sold into slavery. The fierce Zotto, Duke of Beneventum, sacked the monastery of Monte Cassino, and nearly a century

<sup>3</sup> Paulus, *Hist. Langob.*, II, 32.



and a half elapsed before the Holy Mount was once more inhabited by the sons of St. Benedict.

Tired at length of the arbitrary rule of the dukes, the Lombards, in 585, chose Authari, Kleph's son, to be their king. He restored order in the administration of the kingdom and obtained the friendship of the Bavarians, the most powerful rivals of the Franks, by marrying Theodolinda, the daughter of Duke Garibald. It was against Authari that the gallant boy-king Childebert, the son of Sigibert and Brunhilde, urged alike by Emperor and Pope—he is said to have received a subsidy of fifty thousand sous of gold from the Emperor Maurice—vainly contended between the years 585 and 590. Weakly supported by the Exarch, he lost two armies in Northern Italy; wars at home prevented him from renewing the attempt to drive out the Lombards.

After Authari's death (591), the Lombards desired Theodolinda to choose another husband among the nobility, and promised to accept him as their king. Her choice fell on Agilulf, Duke of Turin, a brave warrior and prudent statesman, who showed himself worthy in every way of the confidence reposed in him. The marriage took place at Pavia, where Agilulf was also crowned, the famous "iron crown", so-called because it enshrined one of the Holy Nails, being used for the first time at the ceremony.

Theodolinda was an ardent Catholic, and it was chiefly due to her influence that Agilulf permitted his son Adalwald to be brought up in the Catholic faith, and that part of the Lombard nation abjured the Arian heresy to which they had clung so tenaciously for more than a hundred years. The cathedral of St. John at Monza, with its beautiful mosaics, and numerous other religious foundations bear witness to the enlightened zeal and piety of this truly Christian queen and mother of her country, to whom history justly assigns a place beside a Chlotilda, a Radegundis and a Bertha in the noble line of saintly medieval women who did so much by the ardor of their faith and the purity of their lives to civilize and Christianize the Teutonic races.

At the court of Agilulf and Theodolinda, then residing at Milan, Columban found the heartiest welcome. The fame of

his learning and sanctity, of his conflict with the terrible Brunhilde, of his banishment and his missionary labors in Alaman-nia, had long since reached Italy, and curiosity as well as admiration and sympathy had prepared the way for his reception. Theodolinda was glad of Columban's coming for another reason: she hoped to find in the redoubtable Celt a valuable ally in her fight against Arianism. She was not disappointed in her expectations. During his stay in Milan, Columban carried on a vigorous campaign against the Arians, in which his profound knowledge of the Scriptures stood him in good stead. He also wrote a treatise "Against the Errors of the Arian Heretics", which Jonas praises for its florid style.

Some writers maintain that Columban was instrumental in bringing about the conversion of Agilulf; but this is a gratuitous assertion, based on no contemporary testimony. From Columban's letter to Boniface IV we know that Agilulf, though favorably disposed to the Catholic Church, was still an Arian in 613, and there is no record anywhere of a subsequent conversion. Arianism lost ground continually, especially among the common people, and would no doubt have been stamped out completely during the lifetime of Theodolinda but for the unhappy schism which then divided northern Italy and Istria into two hostile camps. It was not until the middle of the seventh century, with the death of Rothari, the last Arian king, that Arianism ceased to be officially recognized in Lombardy.

## II.

### COLUMBAN AND THE AFFAIR OF THE THREE CHAPTERS.

THE schism to which we alluded in the previous chapter was already more than half a century old when Columban came face to face with it during his sojourn at the Lombard court. It originated in the controversy concerning the so-called Three Chapters.

The Origenistic controversy,<sup>1</sup> which had slumbered since the days of St. John Chrysostom, was revived in the first half of the sixth century by Domitian, Theodore Askidas, and other monks of the Palestinian Laurae. The matter coming to the ears of the Emperor Justinian, gave that prince a coveted opportunity of displaying his zeal for the orthodox faith. In the year 543 he published an imperial edict containing ten anathemas against Origenism, and a number of court synods hastened to condemn what the theologian on the throne of Constantine had condemned. To stave off further persecution of the Origenists, Askidas, who had in the meantime become bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, aided by the Empress Theodora, the protectress of the Monophysites, cleverly diverted the Emperor's passion for dogmatizing and anathematizing into another channel. They told him that he could easily reconcile the Monophysites to the Church if three stumbling-blocks were removed. At the Council of Chalcedon (451), they said, Theodoret of Cyrrihus and Ibas of Edessa had been restored to their sees; but they had in reality been Nestorians, and must therefore be condemned together with Theodore of Mopsuestia, the spiritual father of Nestorianism. Justinian readily agreed to their proposal, and in a

<sup>1</sup> Viz. the controversy about Origen's orthodoxy. The opponents of Origen claimed that his writings contained heterodox opinions in regard to the Holy Trinity; that he taught the eternity of the material world, the preëxistence of the souls of men, and a kind of metempsychosis, and finally, the ἀποκατάστασις πάντων, that all created beings, including Satan, would ultimately be saved.

“theological edict”<sup>2</sup> issued in 544 anathematized three things, or *Chapters*—*Τρία Κεφάλαια*; viz., the person and the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, the writings of Theodoret against Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus, and the Letter of Ibas to Maris, bishop of Hardashir in Persia.

After some hesitation the majority of the bishops of the East signed the imperial anathemas; but the bishops of the West, Pope Vigilius at their head, refused their signatures, and with good reason. The condemnation of the Three Chapters was dogmatically correct, but altogether uncalled-for, and calculated to cast discredit on the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon. Besides, the fact that a temporal ruler had undertaken to issue dogmatical decrees and to censure ecclesiastics and their writings was in itself sufficient to arouse suspicion. Theodore of Mopsuestia had died at peace with the Church before the Council of Ephesus; Theodoret and Ibas had retracted their errors and anathematized Nestorius, and both had become intrepid defenders of orthodoxy, Theodoret’s persevering zeal against Eutychianism having brought about his condemnation and deposition in the notorious pseudo-council of Ephesus (440), called for its combined heresy and cruelty the “Gang of Thieves”. What purpose could it serve to persecute these men a hundred years after their death?

Justinian might have been content with the submission of the East, but he had set his heart on seeing his favorite edict approved by the whole Church. To break the opposition of Vigilius, he determined, at the instance of Theodora, to bring him, if need be by force, to Constantinople: once in his power, he would find means to bend him to his will. After having been kept in durance in the Imperial City for nearly three years, and plied with threats and persuasions and promises, Vigilius at last consented, for the sake of the peace of the Church, to confirm the condemnation of the Three Chapters by his apostolic authority.

The action of Vigilius aroused a storm of indignation in the West. It was falsely interpreted as a disavowal of the Council of Chalcedon and a countenancing of the Eutychian heresy which that Council had anathematized. The bishops of Africa

<sup>2</sup> The original text of this edict is lost.

even forgot themselves so far as to pronounce sentence of excommunication against all the signers of the imperial edict. Alarmed at the growing discontent, Vigilius retracted his condemnation of the Three Chapters, and it was agreed between him and the Emperor to refer the whole dispute to a general council. In spite of this agreement, Justinian issued a new edict<sup>3</sup> against the Three Chapters in 551, and when Vigilius refused to sanction it, he summoned a synod at Constantinople (5 May to 2 June, 553), which condemned the Three Chapters in fourteen dogmatic canons and threatened their defenders with deposition and banishment. Vigilius, who had refused to be present at the sessions of the synod, on 14 May published a decree in which he condemned sixty propositions taken from the writings of Theodore, but forbade the censuring of his person or of the writings of Theodoret and Ibas. Thereupon Justinian accused him of Nestorianism and sent him into exile.

Vigilius had now been absent eight years from Rome. By the victories of Narses, Justinian had in the meantime become master of all Italy, and there was danger of his attempting to place one of his creatures on the Apostolic Chair. Seeing that nothing was to be gained by further resistance, Vigilius sanctioned the acts of the Synod of Constantinople and was allowed to return to the Eternal City. As Vigilius's successor, Pelagius I also confirmed the decrees of the synod, it took rank as the Fifth Ecumenical Council.

The recognition of the Council of Constantinople by two successive Pontiffs did not, however, end the affair of the Three Chapters. In Northern Italy, Istria, Illyria, Rhaetia, Tuscany, and Africa, opposition to the decisions of the Council grew daily more pronounced, and for many years all attempts at reconciliation were in vain. Archbishop Laurentius of Milan (574) was the first of the schismatics to return to communion with the Holy See, while the other bishops of Northern Italy, especially those of the Province of Aquileia, obstinately refused all overtures of peace. To make matters worse the Lombard Court sided with the schismatics and encouraged them in their opposition. In this state of affairs Gregory the

<sup>3</sup> Migne, *Pat. Graec.*, t. 86, pp. 993-1036.

Great and his successors thought it wise to adopt a policy of silence: time and prudent reserve, they were convinced, would heal the schism more effectually than coercive measures. At first, however, this policy had the contrary effect: Vigilius had erred, the schismatics said, and as his successors did not have the courage to disown him and to set his error right, they were under the same condemnation.<sup>4</sup>

It was at this stage of the controversy that Columban became involved in it. He had scarcely arrived in Milan when he received a letter from Agrippinus, bishop of Como, advising him to be on his guard against Pope Boniface. At Rome, his correspondent told him, the rule of faith is no longer strictly maintained, for Nestorius, Eutyches, and Dioscorus, those arch-heretics, are held in honor there. Columban was thunder-struck, he tells us himself, and replied that he did not believe the scandalous insinuation: the Chair of Peter, the firm pillar of the truth, could never be the refuge of heresy. But the false reports busily circulated by the schismatics about the supposed defection of Vigilius and the errors of the Fifth General Council imperceptibly won him over to the party of the defenders of the Three Chapters. And when Agilulf and Theodolinda, who were both anxious to see peace restored among the warring factions within their dominions, requested him to write to Rome in the matter, he was all the more ready to comply because there was every hope that, if the dissensions were happily composed, many Lombards, and even the king himself, would embrace the Catholic faith.<sup>5</sup>

It is a pity that Columban did not take the trouble of informing himself accurately on the history of the whole controversy before writing to the Pope; as it is, his letter shows complete ignorance of the question at issue. The document being too long to quote in full—it contains about five thousand words—we have taken the liberty, while studiously endeavoring to preserve the sense from injury, of omitting some passages, and of condensing others.

In the dedication Columban calls Boniface "the most beautiful Head of the Churches of all Europe, the most sweet Pope,

<sup>4</sup>For an excellent account of the affair of the *Three Chapters* see Grisar, *Gesch. Roms und der Päpste im Mittelalter*, I, Nos. 329, 371 ff., 439.

<sup>5</sup>See Columban's Letter to Boniface IV.

the Supreme Pontiff, the Pastor of pastors, the venerable Sentinel", and himself a "pilgrim, an uncultured rustic, the humblest and most insignificant of men", not deserving to be called Columba, a dove, but Palumba, a wild pigeon. The letter itself begins with characteristic abruptness:

Who can bear to listen to this bald-head? Who is this garrulous and presumptuous person who dares to write such things without being asked? Perhaps someone, eager to retaliate, will say to me, as the Hebrew, who struck his brother, said to Moses: "Who hath appointed thee prince and judge over us?"<sup>6</sup> To him I answer, that it is not presumption to speak when the edification of the Church requires it; and if my person gives him offence, let him consider, not who it is that speaks, but what is said. Why should a Christian stranger conceal what your Arian neighbor has long since talked abroad? "Better are the wounds of a friend than the deceitful kisses of an enemy."<sup>7</sup> Others, with malicious pleasure, speak ill of you behind your back; I for my part shall, though with sorrow and pain, openly expose the dire effects of the existing schism. Believe me, it is not vanity or impertinence that prompts me, the vilest of men, to write to men of such exalted station: grief, not pride, urges me to tell you, in all humility, as is befitting, that through your dissensions "the name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles."<sup>8</sup> . . . I speak as your friend, as your disciple, as your faithful retainer, not as a stranger; therefore I call out boldly to you, our masters, the helmsmen and mystic oarsmen of our spiritual ship: Watch, for the sea is in uproar, vexed with death-bringing storm-winds; watch, for the water has already entered the ship of the Church, and she is in danger of sinking!

Columban claims the right to admonish others to stand firm in the faith, because he is a son of a land that knows neither heresy nor schism; that has preserved the Christian faith pure and entire; and in the Bishop of Rome acknowledges and venerates the Supreme Head of the Church, and continues with him, and through him with the whole Church, in a never interrupted communion. He continues:

We are the disciples of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of the other holy men of God who, inspired by the Holy Ghost, wrote the sacred canon of the Scriptures. Dwelling in the ultimate places of the

<sup>6</sup> Exod. 2:14.

<sup>7</sup> Prov. 27:6.

<sup>8</sup> Is. 52:5; Rom. 2:24.

earth, the Hibernians receive no other doctrine but that of the Gospel and of the Apostles. In our island there are no heretics, no Jews, no schismatics. Here the Catholic faith is preserved as intact as it was delivered to us by you, the successors of the Apostles. This fact has emboldened me to stir you up against those who calumniate you and decry you as patronizers of heretics and schismatics. In your name I answered these defamers, as a disciple should in the name of his master, that the Roman Church never defends a heretic. Let not my boasting come to nought: let them, not us, be confounded. Wherefore, I entreat you, bear with my presumption, and turn a kindly-disposed heart and a loyal ear to my proposals. Whatever I shall say that is orthodox and useful will redound to your honor: for is not the pure doctrine of the disciples the glory of the master? and when the son speaks wisely, does not the father rejoice? The river owes the purity of its water, not to itself, but to the source from which it springs. But if, in this letter to you, or in the one to Agrippinus, which I enclose,<sup>9</sup> words have escaped me which transgress the bounds of moderation, do not ascribe them to pride, but to my lack of discretion.

And what are his proposals to the Pontiff? The only efficacious means, in his eyes, of calming the tempest which is menacing the Church with ruin, is an explicit profession of faith, committed to writing and published before a council:

Watch over the peace of the Church; come to the aid of your sheep, terrified by the wolves; speak to them with the voice of the true Pastor; stand between them and the wolves, so that, laying aside all fear, they may recognize you as their true shepherd. . . . Be vigilant at your post day and night. If you do not wish to lose the honor due to your apostolic office, preserve the apostolic faith; confirm it by your testimony; fortify it by a written instrument; cover it with the authority of a synod, and no one will have the right to resist you. Do not, I entreat you, scorn this advice because it comes from a foreigner.

To add emphasis to his warnings and counsels, Columban reminds the Pope that all the signs of the times point to a

<sup>9</sup> This was Columban's second letter to Agrippinus. "I am submitting it," he says in a passage of the letter to Boniface which we have condensed in the text, "to you for approval: for I do not account myself by any means among those who are above correction." Neither of the letters to Agrippinus has been preserved.



speedy dissolution of all things, to the final catastrophe and the last Judgment. He shared this belief with many other great and holy men of that direful age. Bishop Redemptus of Ferentum, while spending the night in prayer at the tomb of the holy martyr Eutychius, heard a voice calling to him: "The end of all flesh is at hand".<sup>10</sup> St. Avitus, the famous bishop of Vienne, was convinced that the world was tottering to its ruin,<sup>11</sup> and an inscription placed in the new church of the Apostles in Rome by John III told the worshipper that the world was hastening to its end.<sup>12</sup> In the face of the general desolation, temporal and spiritual, Columban, like Avitus, looks to Rome, the heart of the world, for succor and encouragement:

The world is on the wane; the Chief Pastor is drawing near. . . . We are standing on the verge of time; our days are full of perils. Behold, nations are troubled and kingdoms are bowed down:<sup>13</sup> "the Almighty shall quickly utter His voice, and the earth shall tremble". Take care, when He comes, He find you not neglectful of your duty, and striking your fellow-servants with the blows of bad example, and eating and drinking; lest you suffer the consequences of your false security. It is not enough to be solicitous for yourself, for you have taken upon yourself the care of many; and to whom much is given, from him much is also required.

Watch, therefore, Holy Father; again I say: Watch; because Vigilius was not perhaps vigilant<sup>14</sup> enough. Your vigilance will be the salvation of many, just as blind security on your part would be the undoing of many. . . . Though a timid warrior myself, I shall nevertheless strive to rouse you, our commander-in-chief; for we are beset on all sides by our enemies. It is your duty to ward off danger from the whole army of the Lord. All look to you, for to you power has been given to declare war, to encourage the other leaders, to order the troops, to give the signal for battle, to take your place in the fore-front of the battle-line. Woe to us, if, in a land where the enemies of the true faith are armed for the fight, we give ourselves

<sup>10</sup> Greg. Dial., 3, C. 38.

<sup>11</sup> Ep. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Grisar, l. c., p. 697.

<sup>13</sup> Columban no doubt alludes to the terrible wars then going on between the Merovingians; perhaps to the death of Theoderic and Brunhilde and the fall of the kingdoms of Burgundy and Austrasia in the year 613.

<sup>14</sup> A play on the name of Pope Vigilius. Compare his pun on Leo in the Letter to St. Gregory the Great.

up to indolence and a false optimism. Coming from the confines of the world, where I saw the spiritual leaders fight the battles of God, I thought I should find even braver and abler captains here; but with pain and disappointment, not unmixed with fear, I view the battle-field, and turn my eyes to you, our sole hope, and bewail the rout of so great an army. . . .

Returning again to the necessity of prompt and energetic interference on the part of the Holy See, he says:

Cut off without delay, I beseech you, the root of this schism with the sword of St. Peter; make a public profession of the true faith before a synod; excommunicate all heretics, and thus purge the Chair of Peter from every stain of error, should any, as is alleged, have crept into it. It were indeed a subject of grief and dismay, if the Apostolic See, the chief seat of orthodoxy,<sup>15</sup> did not maintain the rule of faith, and were on this account to be pointed at with the finger of scorn. For the love of Christ, I beg of you, defend your good name, which is being torn to shreds among the nations, and do not draw down upon yourself the charge of treason by persisting any longer in silence.

Take away the confusion that covers the face of your sons and disciples, who are reviled on your account; take away, above all, the suspicion that envelopes the Chair of St. Peter. For it is not a small matter that is laid to your charge. You are accused of holding communion with heretics—but God forbid I should believe that. It is asserted that Eutyches, Nestorius and Dioscorus, those heretics of old, were received into the Church by Vigilius in some fifth synod or other. This, it is claimed, is the cause of the whole scandal, a scandal perpetuated by you, if it is true that you have also received them. Your actions seem to give some color to this accusation; for, if you know that Vigilius died infected with this error, why is his name still commemorated?<sup>16</sup>

Then, forgetting for a moment all his former protestations of unalterable trust in the wisdom and indefectibility of the

<sup>15</sup> "Fidei orthodoxae Sedem principalem." Bossuet remarks on these words: "Magnifice ac praeclare de Sedis apostolicae majestate dictum." (*Defensio Declar. Cleri Gallicani*, IX, 25.)

<sup>16</sup> That is, registered in the diptychs and commemorated at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The diptychs were folded tablets containing in one part the names of living and in the other those of dead orthodox persons, such as Popes, bishops, emperors, for whom commemoration was made at the divine service. "To have one's name registered in the diptychs was a great honor, and to have it erased was synonymous with excommunication." (*Internat. Dict.*)

Roman Pontiffs, he indulges in language which is nothing short of defiant and rebellious:

It is your fault if you have turned aside from the true faith, if "you have made void your first faith".<sup>17</sup> With good reason your inferiors resist you; with good reason they refuse to communicate with you as long as the memory of the impious has not been branded with infamy and given up to oblivion. If there is more truth than falsehood in the reports spread about you, the rôles are reversed: your sons are—it grieves me sorely to say so—"as the head and you are as the tail".<sup>18</sup> Those who have always remained true to the orthodox faith, even though they be your inferiors, will be your judges.

But it was not the spirit of revolt that dictated these rash words. Zeal for the triumph of the truth, as he conceived it, zeal for the honor of the Holy See, had guided, or rather misguided, his pen. He was a man who engaged warmly in any cause which he deemed to be the cause of God; who pursued his object with earnestness and ardor, overriding persons and institutions in his eagerness to attain it. His zeal for God was unmistakable, but unfortunately it was not always "according to knowledge". He is conscious of the temerity of his words, and attempts to excuse them; but the attempt is not a very happy one, except in so far as we are indebted to it for the finest tribute paid by ancient Ireland to Christian Rome:

Forgive me, if my harsh words have offended your pious ears. The freedom of discussion which is a characteristic of my native land is in part to blame for my boldness. Amongst us, not persons, but reasons, are weighed. My great solicitude that peace and harmony should reign among you, urges me to speak out frankly, and to hide nothing. We, as I said before, are sincerely attached to the Chair of St. Peter; for, great and renowned as Rome is, it is through this Chair alone that she is illustrious in our country. Though the fame of the ancient city, the glory of Ausonia, was spread abroad over the whole earth, and she was held in the highest honor by almost every nation as something sovereignly august,—yet in our eyes you are great and sublime only since God deigned to appear on earth, and the Spirit of God was poured out upon the nations, and the Chariot of the Son of God, drawn by those fiery steeds of

<sup>17</sup> I Tim. 5: 12.

<sup>18</sup> Deut. 28: 44.

the Holy Ghost, the Apostles Peter and Paul, in the possession of whose bodies, those dear pledges of their love, you are so blest, traversed the great ocean and came to our shores. And if, in the language of the Scripture, we call those "heavens" who proclaim the glory of God, whose "words have gone forth unto the ends of the world",<sup>19</sup> then through the great Apostles you are all but heavenly beings, and Rome, the capital of the world, is also the head of all the Churches, the place of Christ's resurrection being alone holier and more privileged.<sup>20</sup> Such being the dignity of your See, you ought to take care not to prejudice it by any act of yours. For only so long as right reason is on your side, will your authority remain undisputed: the true keeper of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven is he who opens the gates to the worthy and closes them against the unworthy. If he did the contrary of this, he could neither open nor close. All the world knows that the Saviour gave the keys of Heaven to St. Peter; but if you are puffed up on this account, and claim above others some unheard of power in divine things,<sup>21</sup> remember that such presumption will lessen your authority in the sight of God.

After some reflections on the greatness of the sin of those who "rend asunder the garment of the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world, which is the unity of the Church", or "divide the Body of Christ", he makes an eloquent appeal for peace:

Dearly beloved, be of one mind; consign the old quarrels to eternal silence and oblivion. What is doubtful, leave to the judgment of God; but what is clear, what men can pass judgment upon, "judge without respect of persons":<sup>22</sup> "judge ye truth and judgment of peace in your gates";<sup>23</sup> and forgive one another that there may be joy in Heaven upon your peace and unity. Being true Christians, for what else should you be solicitous than to defend the Catholic faith? I cannot understand how Christian can quarrel with Chris-

<sup>19</sup> Ps. 18: 2, 5.

<sup>20</sup> St. Avitus of Vienne, a most energetic upholder of the authority of Rome, ascribes a similar precedence to Jerusalem. "Exercet apostolatus vester," he wrote to the Bishop of Jerusalem, "concessos a divinitate primatus et quod principem locum in universalis ecclesia teneat, non privilegiis solum studet monstrare, sed meritis" (Ep. 33).

<sup>21</sup> Columban no doubt alludes to the condemnation of the *Three Chapters*, which the Council of Chalcedon had spared.

<sup>22</sup> I Pet. 1: 17.

<sup>23</sup> Zach. 8: 16.

tian about the faith. Whatever one orthodox Christian, who gives true glory to God, says, the other will answer: Amen; because what the one believes and loves, the other also believes and loves.

After a brief exposition of the Nicene Creed, he continues:

Pardon me for my freedom of speech: I could not write otherwise, though I knew I should be blamed on this account. In the cause of God, however, I do not fear the tongues of men, which are more prone to lying than to speaking the truth. Once more I entreat you, because many doubt the purity of your faith, to remove this stain from the beauty of the Holy See. For surely the charge of inconsistency raised against her, as if she could be turned from the firmness of the true faith by every show of violence, must not be allowed to rest on the Roman Church, the Church for which so many martyrs shed their blood, preferring to die rather than to prove traitors. King Agilulf beseeches you, Queen Theodolinda beseeches you, all beseech you, to put an end to this schism as soon as possible, that all may be one, that there may be but one fold of Christ, that peace may be restored to Italy, and to the whole Church. What is sweeter than peace after war? What is more delicious than the reunion of brothers after a long separation? The peace of the sons will be an everlasting joy to the Father in Heaven and to our Mother the Church on earth!

He concludes with a humble request for the prayers of the Pontiff and of the Roman clergy:

Pray for me, Holy Father, and you my brothers, for me, a vile sinner, and for my fellow-pilgrims, at the Holy Places where the ashes of the Saints repose, and above all at the tomb of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the great captains of the Great King, the peerless champions of Christ crucified, whom they followed even to the shedding of their blood, that we may have grace to cleave to Christ, that we may find favor in His eyes, that we may never be lacking in thankfulness to Him, and that we may join with you and all the saints in praising and glorifying Him together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

The most contradictory judgments have been passed on this remarkable letter. One Catholic historian,<sup>24</sup> shocked by the boldness of the language and the extreme rashness of many of

<sup>24</sup> Fr. von Kerz, continuator of Leopold von Stollberg's *Gesch. der Religion Jesu Christi*, vol. 21, p. 97.

its statements, calls it "a tissue of nonsense from the first line to the last"; while another, struck by the repeated protestations of humility and filial affection for the Holy Father, the great familiarity with the Scriptures and the great variety of topics touched upon, pronounces it "a most polite epistle", and believes that it would alone suffice to give us a very high idea of the writer's sanctity and learning.<sup>25</sup> Catholic apologists quote it as a splendid testimony to the primacy of the Roman See; whereas, not a few Protestant historians infer from it that Columban was a schismatic, the champion of a Rome-free Church and a forerunner of the sixteenth century reformers. Bossuet devotes a whole chapter of his *Defence of the Declaration of the Clergy of France concerning the Ecclesiastical Power* to it, and cites several passages from it in support of his contention that the Pope's judgments are not irreversible until confirmed by the consent of the Church.<sup>26</sup>

Now, whatever conclusions we may draw from Columban's letter in regard to his learning, his virtue, or his personal opinion on Papal infallibility, it leaves no doubt at all as to his attitude on the great question of the Primacy of Peter and his successors. "By his appeals to the Pope," says Professor Hauck,<sup>27</sup> "Columban explicitly recognized the right of the Pope to interfere authoritatively in matters touching the Gallic Church, and to his mandates he ascribes not merely a moral, but a legal, binding force. How far he went in this respect is evidenced by the fact that he applied to the Pope the same Scripture text that served him to determine the relations between the Abbot and his monks: 'Ask thy father, and he will declare to thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee'.<sup>28</sup> Columban was certainly not the spokesman of a Rome-free Church. The frank words which he uses in his letters to Gregory the Great and Boniface cannot change the state of the case, nor his assumption that the Pope could possibly hand down an erroneous decision, and that he himself would then be obliged to contradict the Pope." Taken apart from the context, some of his expressions, it must be admitted, are hard to reconcile with an unreserved recog-

<sup>25</sup> Gianelli, *Vita di S. Colombano*, p. 179.

<sup>26</sup> Part III, Bk. IX, Ch. XXV.

<sup>27</sup> *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* (Protestant), I, p. 281.

<sup>28</sup> Deut. 32: 7. Cf. *Regula Monachorum*, c. 9.

dition of the Primacy. They can, however, be explained by the pain which he felt on hearing that the Roman Church, "the chief seat of orthodoxy", had been suspected of heresy. Similar statements are found in such writers as St. Cyprian, St. Irenaeus and St. Boniface, whose relations to Rome are above suspicion. They prove that the constitution of the Church does not engender slavishness and "base spaniel fawning", as its enemies would have the world believe, and that a noble independence of mind is compatible with the profoundest esteem and reverence for the rulers of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

We do not know what success attended Columban's appeal to the Holy See. There is no record of an answer from the Pope, nor of any further steps taken in the matter by Columban. No doubt, St. Boniface, mindful of his correspondent's labors and trials for the faith, and thoroughly appreciating his zeal for the peace of the Church and his solicitude for the honor of the Chair of Peter, readily pardoned his rash insinuations, and in a spirit of true Christian charity enlightened him as to the real nature of the controversy; and that Columban, on his part, perceiving that he had been duped by the schismatic bishops, broke off all communication with them and submitted unconditionally to the decisions of the Fifth General Council. Besides, about this time a new enterprise, which was to place the crown on his life-work, took him away from the Lombard Court and the temptation of mixing in a dangerous controversy and interfering in the government of the Church.

<sup>29</sup> Funk, *Kirchengeschichtliche Abhandlungen*, I, p. 431.

### III.

#### FOUNDATION OF BOBBIO. THE PILGRIM'S LAST JOURNEY.

WHEN Columban crossed the Alps it was his intention to proceed to Rome in order to prostrate himself, as he says in his letter to Pope St. Gregory, at the tomb of the Princes of the Apostles and to see the Vicar of Christ on earth face to face. The splendid reception which he met with at the Lombard Court and the opportunity offered him of preaching and writing against the Arians, induced him, as we have seen, to interrupt his journey for some months. Then came his unfortunate intervention in the affair of the Three Chapters, and after his hasty and excited letter to the Pope he thought it advisable to put off his visit to the Eternal City until he should have learned what impression it had made there. Anxious, however, to be away from the distractions of court life and the turmoil of controversy, and longing more than ever, now that he felt the end of his life approaching, for quiet and solitude, he began to think seriously of availing himself of the permission granted to him by Agilulf of choosing a site within the Lombard dominions for a monastery.

In the Northern Apennines, which separate Liguria from Emilia, in the valley of the Trebbia, that treacherous little river which proved so disastrous to the Romans in the Second Punic War, there stood an ancient basilica dedicated to St. Peter. A beautiful mountain streamlet, which here empties into the Trebbia, had given its name to the old Roman fort and the surrounding country. The fort had long been dismantled and the church was in a very ruinous condition; but the neighboring mountains afforded stone and timber in inexhaustible store; the land was fertile, producing all manner of fruits and leguminous plants, and the streams abounded with fish. Columban's attention having been drawn to this spot by a certain Jocundus, who appears to have been a native



of those parts, he resolved to go and see it, and, if it suited the purpose, to found a monastery there.

It was the spring or early summer of the year 614 when he took leave of his royal friends in Milan, and with the faithful Attala and a number of other disciples who had joined him since his arrival in Italy proceeded southeastward to Laus Pompeia, the modern Lodi, and Placentia, and thence along the Trebbia to Bobbio. According to a very ancient tradition he stopped for some time at the little town of Mombrione, on the Lambro, to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants, who were still for the most part idolaters. In gratitude to their first apostle, the citizens in after times called their town San Colombano, a name which it still bears.

Arrived at Bobbio, Columban saw at a glance that it was an ideal spot for a monastic settlement. The landscape displayed neither the majesty of the Alpine world, nor the gaiety and luxuriance of the Riviera, nor the exquisite loveliness of the Lake Country, but a simple and chaste beauty, a mixture of ruggedness and grace, of wildness and culture, which appealed alike to his love of solitude and mortification and to his poetical fancy: mountains round about, rising at intervals to a height of several thousand feet, enormous masses of jutting rocks, dark caverns, fearful gorges, smiling brooks and rushing torrents; hill-sides and mountain-slopes, covered with beeches, almonds, olives, vines, peach and fig trees; and amidst all this wealth of natural beauty the venerable temple of God, its doors and windows opened wide, as if inviting him to look in, and see, and pity its utter nakedness and vacancy.

In spite of his seventy-two years, Columban toiled with the youngest of his monks at the work of repair and construction. Long after his death, the older monks used to speak with admiration of his marvelous strength and agility. It was sometimes necessary to fell trees in places that could not be approached by wagons or beasts of burden. Columban and two or three sturdy woodmen—more could not find a safe footing on the difficult ground—would shoulder the huge trunks and carry them to the plain below with an ease that appeared to the astonished spectators nothing short of miraculous.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30.

church was quickly provided with a new roof; the walls were mended, and the simple houses which were needed for the little community were built and enclosed by a rampart of stone. The church of St. Peter gave its name to the monastery and was reserved for the exclusive use of the monks; outside the enclosure a chapel was erected for the convenience of the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The original charter of Bobbio granted by Agilulf to Columban is no longer extant, the copies that have come down to us being of a much later date. Owing to the many changes introduced into the text, changes which destroyed almost every note of antiquity, the document was looked upon as spurious until quite recently, when its authenticity was successfully vindicated.<sup>2</sup> Flavius Agilulfus, the charter says, cedes to the venerable Columbanus and his monks the basilica of the blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and four miles of land, cultivated or uncultivated, on every side of it, with complete property rights over all pertaining thereto except one-half of a well, which he had previously bestowed on Sundrarit,<sup>3</sup> a Lombard nobleman. In return for the royal munificence the monks were to pray daily to God for the stability and prosperity of the kingdom.

Bobbio prospered at the very outset just as Annegray and Luxeuil had prospered. From Piacenza and Pavia, from Tortona and Milan, and even from far-off Susa, and the land of the Franks, Romans and Teutons came to work out their salvation under the severe discipline of the Celtic Abbot. The valley of the Trebbia was to become, like Bangor, a valley of saints and angels: "Montes in circuitu ejus, et Dominus in circuitu populi sui, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum"—"Mountains are round about it, and the Lord is round about His people from henceforth now and forever."

Columban had found an abiding-place at last after his many wanderings. Like the dove, whose name he bore, he had flown far away into the wilderness, and was at rest. And here, in the midst of the brethren whom God had so generously given him for those whom he had left for His Name's

<sup>2</sup> Hartmann in *Neues Archiv.*, XXV, p. 608 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The well here mentioned appears to have been a salt-spring, and may be identical with the spring of Piancasale, whose curative powers are still famous.

sake, he desired to remain and wait for the summons to his eternal rest. But he had scarcely settled down to the work of building up and governing his new monastic city, when the temptation to abandon it presented itself to him under such an alluring shape that it required all his humility and will-power to resist it.

After the battle of Tolbiac and the death of Theodebert, Theoderic prepared to take the field against Chlothar of Neustria. His army was already on the march, when a malignant fever cut him off in his twenty-sixth year. The army disbanded, but Brunhilde remained in Metz with Theoderic's four sons, Sigibert, Corbus, Meroveus and Childebert, and succeeded in having Sigibert proclaimed king of Burgundy and Austrasia. Chlothar, however, secretly supported by Arnulf of Metz,<sup>4</sup> Pepin, and other Austrasian nobles, who feared for the loss of their ascendancy, was already approaching with a powerful army, and Brunhilde fled with the princes to Worms. Here she mustered the Saxons and Thuringians under her banner, and marched against Chlothar. When the armies met on the Aisne, near Châlons-sur-Marne, Warnachar, Brunhilde's Mayor of the Palace, who commanded the Burgundians, went over to Chlothar, and the rest of the army took to flight.

Chlothar made a most barbarous use of his victory. He caused Sigibert and Corbus to be put to death on the spot; Childebert escaped a similar fate by timely flight; Meroveus was spared, because Chlothar had stood sponsor for him at baptism, but degraded from his rank and brought up as a private citizen. Brunhilde, who had escaped across the Jura to Orbe,<sup>5</sup> was hunted down like a wild beast and brought in chains to Renève on the Vingeanne to meet her doom. And what a doom! After all the crimes committed for more than forty years in the palaces of the Merovingians had been laid to her charge, she was condemned to death by a court composed of her deadliest enemies, the Burgundian and Austrasian

<sup>4</sup> St. Arnulf became bishop of Metz in 612 or 613. St. Arnulf and Pepin, erroneously called "of Landen", are the ancestors of the Carolingian House, Arnulf's son Adalgisel having married Pepin's daughter Begga.

<sup>5</sup> In the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland.

nobles who had deserted and betrayed her. After three days of continuous torture, she was placed on a camel and exhibited to the rude soldiery and the ruder rabble of camp-followers; on the fourth day she was bound to an unbroken horse and dashed to pieces.<sup>6</sup>

Fifty years had elapsed since Brunhilde had left her Spanish home in the full bloom of her youth and beauty and innocence. Venantius Fortunatus, "the last Roman poet," who was present at the nuptials in Metz, proclaimed her every inch a queen, and extolled her beauty, her modest demeanor, her prudence, talents and affability:

Pulchra, modesta, decens, sollers, pia, grata, benigna,  
Ingenio, vultu, nobilitate potens.<sup>7</sup>

With what demonstrations of joy the people had welcomed her, and how happy had been the first years of her wedded life! And what had she endured since? The dishonor and foul murder of her beloved sister, who had followed her to the land of the Franks to become the wife of the beastly Chilperich and the victim of the satanic hate of Fredegunde; the murder of her own heroic husband; the hostility of the Austrasian nobles, the frequent attempts on her life, personal indignities, violence, disgrace, and exile. She could not, like the gentle Galsvintha, give place to injustice, but resolutely engaged in the gigantic struggle for power, and with inexhaustible courage and never-flagging energy fought for the cause of the monarchy against the encroachments of the aristocracy. To attain her object she did not shrink from violence and even brutality; she met cunning with cunning, treachery with treachery; and yet, as a modern historian justly remarks,<sup>8</sup> compared with her rival Fredegunde, she stands almost noble before us: she never belied the royal blood that flowed in her veins: she never sank so low as the harlot and murderess by whose son she was so brutally stamped out of existence.

The fury of Brunhilde's enemies did not abate with her terrible death: her poor mangled remains were denied Christian

<sup>6</sup> *Fredegar Chron.*, IV, 38-43; *Vit. Col.*, I, 29; Sisebutus, *Vit. Desiderii*, 19, 21.

<sup>7</sup> Venan. Fortunat., *Carmin*, III, 1, 37; cf. Greg., *Turon*, IV, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Hauck, *Kirchenges. Deutschlands*, I.

burial; like something unholy and defiled, they were burned outside the camp. Pious hands, however, secretly gathered her ashes and interred them in the monastery of St. Martin, at Autun, which, in the heyday of her greatness, she had built and richly endowed. Nine hundred years after her death a daily distribution of alms, known as the "Alms of Brunhilde", still preserved her memory in benediction among the people.<sup>9</sup>

When Chlothar had become sole king of the Franks by the tragedy of Renève, he did not forget the Celtic monk who had repeatedly foretold this change in his fortunes. Sending for Abbot Eustace of Luxeuil, he begged him to go to Italy immediately and bring back Columban to his old home in the Vosges.

Columban was delighted to see his favorite disciple once more and to receive news of his Burgundian communities. But what reply should he send to Chlothar's flattering message? His return to Luxeuil would vindicate him in the eyes of the clergy and the people of Gaul, many of whom had, no doubt, been misinformed as to the true cause of his banishment; it would mean, moreover, a signal triumph over those Burgundian bishops who had made common cause with Theoderic and his court against him. And would it not be the fulfilment of a long-cherished hope—the hope of being laid to rest in the shadow of the great monastery, side by side with the friends and companions who had helped him to found it, in the same grave, perhaps, with his kinsman, the saintly Columbanus the Younger, whom he had loved so tenderly and lost so soon?<sup>10</sup>

Columban would not have been human, if thoughts such as these had not arisen within him. But he resolutely fought them down, for he recognized that it was better, even from a human point of view, to remain where he was. Bobbio needed him more than Luxeuil; and it was more than likely that the old conflict with the Gallic bishops would break out anew with his arrival amongst them. Besides, he knew from experience how great were the fatigues and hardships of a journey across

<sup>9</sup> Montalembert, *Monks of the West*, VII.

<sup>10</sup> St. Columbanus the Younger died shortly after the foundation of Luxeuil. (*Vit. Col.*, 17.) His feast is celebrated on 23 November (*Calendar of Einsiedeln*).

the Alps, even if he were to be provided with all the conveniences of travel possible in those days. Eustace tried to overcome his opposition by representing to him the great advantages that would accrue, not only to Luxeuil, but to the whole Church in the Frankish dominions, through his influence over Chlothar. But all his pleadings were in vain: Columban remained firm in his refusal. It was not the will of God, he said, that he should recross the Alps; he had a work to do in Italy.

Eustace gladly accepted his master's invitation to spend some time at Bobbio, and Columban took occasion of his presence to confide to him his last wishes in regard to the government of Luxeuil, especially enjoining on him the necessity of maintaining strict discipline and insisting on the observance of the Rule he had established. Then taking affectionate leave of him and blessing his departure, he gave him a letter for Chlothar, in which he explained his reasons for not returning to his kingdom, confided Annegray and Luxeuil to his protection, and added some wholesome admonitions for his own conduct.<sup>11</sup>

When the visitors had departed, Columban went about his daily work as usual, rejoicing that he had been found worthy of making a little sacrifice for God. Whatever time he could spare from his arduous duties as superior and director of a growing community he spent in solitude. Pilgrims to Bobbio are still shown two grottos, one about an hour and a half's walk northeast of the city, at a place called *La Spanna*, the other six miles southeast, in an all but inaccessible mass of rock on the left bank of the Coriasca di San Michele, which, according to tradition, were his favorite retreats during the closing months of his life. Here he prepared himself by fasting and prayer for his last journey.

Advancing age with its attendant train of infirmities warned him that the end would not be long delayed. He had so often preached to others that life was but "a race unto death": he was not surprised when he saw the goal looming up before him. It must have been at this time that he addressed the hexameters to his friend Sethus, in which he paints in such living colors the manifold miseries of old age—the frequent

<sup>11</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30.

spells of sickness, the gradual decay of all the faculties, the shrunken limbs, and the stiffening joints; the languor, the chill at the heart, the halting breath; the sleepless nights, the nervousness that starts at every sound; the constant nearness, and yet the uncertainty of the hour of death:

In mentem tibi veniat tremebunda senectus,  
 Quam gelidae tandem sequitur violentia mortis.  
 Ultima jam sapiens meditatatur tempora vitae.  
 Torpentes senio vires morbosque frequentes  
 Incertumque diem loeti certosque dolores;  
 Multa senem fragilis vexant incommoda carnis.  
 Nam macie turpi tabescunt languida membra;  
 Tunc genuum iunctura riget venosque per omnes  
 Illius in toto frigescit corpore sanguis:  
 Sic baculo nitens artus sustentat inertes.  
 Quid tristes memorem gemitus, quid tedia mentis?  
 Somnus abest oculis, illum sonus excitat omnis.  
 Quid meminisse juvat transactae gaudia vitae,  
 Venerit extremi tandem cum terminus aevi?

From the concluding lines of the *Epistle to Fidolius* we learn that he was afflicted with a severe malady, which was probably the cause of his death. "I dictated these verses to you," he says, "all weighed down as I am with a cruel malady; my frail body feels the sad effects of old age, for, in the headlong flight of the years, I have already completed the thrice sixth Olympiad of my life.<sup>12</sup> All things pass away; the days fly beyond recall. Farewell. May you be happy—and think on the sadness of old age."

Haec tibi dictaram morbis oppressus acerbis,  
 Corpore quos fragili patior tristisque senecta;  
 Nam dum praecipiti labuntur tempora cursu,  
 Nunc ad olympiadis ter senos venimus annos.  
 Omnia praetereunt, fugit irreparabile tempus;  
 Vive, vale laetus tristisque memento senectae.

Then the welcome, the long-prayed-for day came, on which God called His exile home. "The blessed Columban," says

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix: *Chronological Questions*.

Jonas, "having spent a year in the cloister of Bobbio,<sup>13</sup> ended his godly life and rendered his soul to Heaven on the twenty-third of November."<sup>14</sup>

In the little chapel on the Steinach the monks had just chanted the Sunday Matins and were preparing to retire to rest, when Gall called the Deacon Maginald and said to him: "Go quickly and prepare the altar for the celebration of Mass."—"How, my Lord," replied the astonished monk, "do you really intend to celebrate Mass?"—"After the night office," Gall explained, "it was revealed to me that my master Columban has fallen asleep in the Lord; I wish to offer up the Holy Sacrifice for the repose of his soul." The bell was immediately rung, and while Gall celebrated the Sacred Mysteries, the assembled Brethren prayed fervently for the soul of Columban.

When the Mass was ended, the man of God said to Maginald: "Hasten to Italy, my son, to the monastery of Bobbio; make diligent inquiry concerning all that has happened to my Father; mark the day and the hour of his death, and return without delay. Do not fear, God will guide your steps."

At Bobbio Maginald learned that Columban had died at the same hour that his passing had been revealed to his master. The Brethren gave him a letter for Gall, containing a full account of Columban's labors in Italy, as well as the Saint's *cambutta*.<sup>15</sup> "Before his death," they said, "our master told us to send his staff to Gall as a token of forgiveness."

The monks of Bobbio laid the remains of their holy founder to rest under the abbey church. From far and near the people, the poor and afflicted above all, flocked to the tomb, which God glorified by numerous miracles, thus ratifying the honors of sainthood spontaneously conferred on His servant by the faithful. To-day the precious relics, together with those of

<sup>13</sup> Dating probably from the visit of St. Eustace, as the context seems to imply.

<sup>14</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30. The year of Columban's death is 615; the day, a Sunday, as we learn from Wettinus, *Vit. Galli*, C. 26. In 615 the 23rd of November fell on a Sunday.

<sup>15</sup> St. Columban's staff was preserved in the church of St. Gall in the ninth century. "St. Notker," says the legend, "made use of it one night to drive away the devil, who had come to the church in the shape of a dog. He wielded the staff with such good effect that it broke in several places and had to be repaired by the blacksmith." (Greith, l. c., p. 377.)



the holy abbots Attala, Bertulf, Bobolen and Comgall, and twenty-one other saints of Bobbio, repose in a costly marble shrine on the high altar in the crypt of the Church of San Colombano.

"The bodies of the saints," says Benedict XIV, "by the grace of the divine mercy always prove a powerful protection for the cities where they repose and are held in veneration." These words of the great Pontiff have been verified in a remarkable degree in the case of Bobbio: heresy, impiety, socialism, and other plagues, which commit such dreadful ravages elsewhere, have not found their way into its green valleys. Like their own century-old castle-tower, which never shakes its summit for blasts of wind, the people of Bobbio have stood firm in the faith of their Patron Saint.

The Fathers are in dust, yet live to God:—

So says the Truth; as if the motionless clay  
Still held the seeds of life beneath the sod,  
Smouldering and struggling till the judgment day.

And hence we learn with reverence to esteem

Of these frail houses, though the grave confines;  
Sophist may urge his cunning tests, and deem

That they are earth;—but they are heavenly shrines.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Newman, *Relics of Saints*.

#### IV.

##### EPILOGUE. THE INFLUENCE OF LUXEUIL AND BOBBIO.

“**S**T. COLUMBAN,” says a modern historian, “was neither the first nor the last Irishman who, impelled by his nation’s passion for pilgrimage and filled with the yearning to follow Christ as a stranger in a strange land, passed his days on the Continent; the names of most of them are forgotten; they achieved little, or, at all events, nothing lasting. If it was different with Columban, if deeper influences went out from him than from the majority of his countrymen, the reason is that in him the fiery, passionate temper of the Celt was paired with uncommon strength of character.”<sup>1</sup>

It was not merely for rhetorical effect that the ninth-century hymnist<sup>2</sup> compares Columban to the patriarchs and prophets of old, to Abraham, Moses, Elias, Daniel, and, above all, to St. John the Baptist:

Hic terram cum Abraham  
reliquit et cognatos  
propter Deum.

Hic cum Johanne regis  
incestum increpare  
non metuit.

Like John, it was not his business to foretell events for the benefit of the Church in succeeding ages, but to correct and reform what was amiss among the race of men with whom he lived and conversed; to put men in mind of the eternal and immutable laws, and to raise their eyes and their hearts above this fleeting scene to the everlasting realities: he was raised

<sup>1</sup> Hauck, l. c., I, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup> Ekkehard of St. Gall, *Troparion: A solis occasu usque ad exortum*. (See Mone, *Lat. Hymnen des Mittalt.*, III, p. 256.)

up to be "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the paths to dwell in". And in the discharge of this part of the prophetic office he displayed all the fearless energy and utter disregard of human considerations, the prompt resolution, the impulsive impetuosity, and the impatience of contradiction of an Elias and an Eliseus.

Like the prophets, he too was surrounded at the time of his death by an army of spiritual sons, who, by their prudence, their indefatigable activity, their talent for organization, not only rescued his foundations from impending ruin, but brought them to the zenith of power and influence. If monasticism flourished in the seventh century as never before in the West, this was due in the first place to the mighty impetus given to it by the disciples of Luxeuil and Bobbio.

Three years after Columban's banishment from Luxeuil, Chlothar II, as we have seen, united Burgundy and Austrasia under his sceptre. The son of Chilperic and Fredegunde is characterized by Fredegar<sup>3</sup> as a man "who feared God, enriched the Church, gave abundant alms to the poor, and showed himself gentle and full of goodness to all". Luxeuil above all was dear to him for the sake of Columban. He promoted its interests in many ways, says Jonas, endowing it with annual revenues, enlarging its domains, and coming to the assistance of the monks on every occasion.<sup>4</sup> The future of the monastery being thus assured, candidates for admission flocked to it from all sides, and a period of unexampled prosperity began to dawn for Columban's favorite foundation.

Except in regard to the Irish custom of celebrating Easter, which he had the prudence to abandon as soon as he took up the reins of government, Eustace, Columban's successor, faithfully adhered to the rules and regulations laid down by his master. He was especially careful to carry out his wish that from Luxeuil the Gospel should be preached to the neighboring nations. Entrusting the direction of the monastery to one of his provosts, he set out with a party of monks for the country of the Warasci, a semi-pagan German tribe which had settled in the valley of the Doubs, and in a short time rooted

<sup>3</sup> *Chron.*, IV, 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30.

out every vestige of idolatry and heresy in those parts. Then he pushed on to the Alamannian territories; but finding that Gall and his companions were already successfully cultivating this portion of the Lord's vineyard, he crossed the Suabian Alps and attempted the evangelization of the Bavarians. His zeal was rewarded by numerous conversions, and the missionaries whom he left behind when he returned to Luxeuil prepared the harvest so abundantly reaped later on by Trudpert, Emmeran and Corbinian.

Under Eustace's wise direction Luxeuil became a nursery of saints and missionaries. He numbered among his pupils the sons of the noblest families of Burgundy, Neustria and Austrasia, not a few of whom were afterwards elevated to the episcopal dignity in various parts of the Frankish dominions. We have already mentioned Donatus of Besançon and Chagnold of Laon; Mummolenus became bishop of Noyon, Aichar of Vermandois, Noyon and Tournai, Ragnachar of Basel, Audomar of Boulogne and Therouanne, Leudoin-Bodo of Toul, Hermanfried of Verdun.<sup>5</sup>

Unworthy candidates also presented themselves from time to time. The most troublesome of these false brethren was a certain Agrestius. Born of wealthy parents, he could claim kindred with men in high station both in Church and State. While acting as secretary to Theoderic II he was strongly attracted to the monastic life and betook himself with all he possessed to Luxeuil. But restless as he was by nature, he soon tired of the monotonous life of a cloistered monk and sought permission to preach the Gospel to the heathen. It was at first denied him, because neither his superiors nor his fellow-monks thought him qualified for such a work. His persistence, however, overcame all obstacles, and he was sent on the Bavarian mission. Finding to his great chagrin that not even a shadow of success attended his preaching, he quitted his post in disgust and retired to Aquileia in Istria. Here he eagerly espoused the cause of the defenders of the Three Chapters, and preached against the Holy See in the towns and villages of Northern Italy.

<sup>5</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 8.

On his return to Luxeuil he was taken severely to task by Abbot Eustace, and when he would neither retract his errors nor cease to propagate them, the pruning knife was applied, and he was cut off from the society of the monks. To revenge himself for his discomfiture and disgrace, he inaugurated a campaign of vilification and calumny against the Rule of St. Columban, at first in the monasteries with which the monks of Luxeuil had existing relations, and then among the clergy and the laity. As is usual in such cases, he received counsel and support in various quarters. His relatives, among them Bishop Abelenus of Geneva, naturally sided with him, and at the Court he found a ready confederate in Warnachar, the Mayor of the Palace, who was jealous of Eustace's influence over the king. Abelenus succeeded in inspiring a number of his fellow-bishops with his prejudices against Luxeuil and before long Chlothar was beset with petitions to revise or suppress the Rule of St. Columban. But the conspirators met with a well-deserved rebuff. The king warmly defended the abbot of Luxeuil, and when he saw that the rancor of Agrestius and the hostility of Warnachar threatened to bring on serious disturbances in Church and State, he referred the whole dispute to the synod then assembled in Mâcon (626-627).

Agrestius appeared as the chief accuser. The sudden death of Warnachar just before the opening of the proceedings had disconcerted him, and it was with considerable difficulty that Archbishop Treticus of Lyons, the President of the Council, could induce him to specify his charges against Luxeuil. The monks are obliged, he said at last, to make the Sign of the Cross over a spoon before using it, and to ask for a blessing when leaving or returning to the monastery. Asked whether he had no more serious accusation to bring forward, he said that Columban was a heretic, because he had departed from the practice of the Church in regard to the tonsure, the manner of celebrating Mass,<sup>6</sup> and other canonical prescriptions.

Eustace defended the Rule of his master manfully and well: especially deep was the impression made on the assembled

<sup>6</sup> On the Ordinary of the Mass in the Celtic liturgies see Art. "Celtic Rite" (H. Jenner) in *Cath. Encyclopedia*. The manner of celebrating Mass in Luxeuil seems to have differed very little from the Roman rite; Agrestius speaks only of a "multiplicity of prayers." (*Vit. Col.*, II, 10.)

Fathers when he summoned Agrestius to appear before the judgment seat of Heaven within a twelvemonth. "Here," he said to him, "the servant of God, whose orthodoxy you have assailed, will be able to defend himself".

The majority of the bishops were by no means favorably disposed towards Agrestius, but as he could count on many influential supporters even within their own body, they did not think it advisable to condemn him, and brought about a reconciliation between him and Eustace. On the part of Agrestius the reconciliation was not sincere. The kiss of peace with which he sealed it was a Judas kiss; for he had no sooner left the Council Hall, than he continued his intrigues against the Rule of Columban. Before many months, however, his career was brought to a bad end: he was slain by a servant whom he had himself redeemed from slavery. With his death opposition to Luxeuil seems to have died out, for Jonas tells us that even Abelenus became Eustace's friend and a liberal patron of the Columban monasteries.<sup>7</sup>

Eustace was succeeded in 629 by Waldebert, a Frank of noble lineage, who had been a famous warrior before the grace of God drew him to the monastic life. During his long rule of forty years Luxeuil became the foremost monastery on the Continent. The number of the monks increased so rapidly—the Chronicle of Luxeuil speaks of more than six hundred<sup>8</sup>—that it became necessary to found branch institutions. Fridold, one of the few still surviving companions of St. Columban, led a colony of monks into the wild Münstertal and founded the monastery of Granfelden. A second colony settled on the Doubs, in the heart of the Jura, and soon converted the hermitage of Ursicinus into a flourishing monastery; while a third laid the foundations of Pfermund in the Valley of Delsberg. Following the example of Columban, Waldebert appointed a provost over each community and an abbot over all three, with his seat in Granfelden. The first abbot was St. Germanus of Trier, who afterwards lost his life while fearlessly defending the poor peasantry against a band of plundering Alsatian soldiery.

<sup>7</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Chron. Luxov.*, M. G., V, 200.

Granfelden, St. Ursanne and Pfermund were the only foundations which can be properly called colonies of Luxeuil. But the religious institutions which owed their existence to Columban or to his immediate successors are not the full measure of what he accomplished; we must also take into account those which were founded by persons whose spiritual life had been directly or indirectly influenced by him.<sup>9</sup>

We have already mentioned the great services rendered to monasticism by St. Donatus, bishop of Besançon, his brother Chramnelenus and his mother Flavia; by Autharius and Aiga, and their sons Ado, Rado and Dado (Audoenus or Ouen), and by Chagneric and Leudegundis, and their children Chagnoald, Burgundofara, and Faro. The monasteries founded and endowed by the sons of Autharius served as models for a number of other religious houses. St. Filibert, a friend of Audoenus and a pupil of Bobbio and Luxeuil, after having been abbot of Rebaix for some years, founded two monasteries for men, Jumièges in the diocese of Rouen and Noirmoutier in the diocese of Poitiers; and two for women, Pavilly and Montévilliers, in the diocese of Rouen, and reformed the monastery of Quincy, near Poitiers, in the spirit of Luxeuil. "Many other monasteries," adds his biographer, "rose in Neustria under his influence, and priests came from all parts of Gaul to Jumièges to profit by the holy founder's teaching and to imbue themselves with his spirit."<sup>10</sup>

Through Audoenus the far-famed goldsmith Eligius entered the Columbanian circle. The friendship of these two remarkable men dated from the time when both were at the Merovingian court, Audoenus as chancellor and Eligius as *magister nummorum* of Dagobert I. After passing some time at Luxeuil, Eligius established the famous monastery of Solignac near Limoges, and a number of other institutions for men and women in Paris and Noyon. From Solignac Columban's Rule made its way into the archdiocese of Cologne,

<sup>9</sup> On the influence of Luxeuil see: *Vit. Col.*, II; the Lives of Merovingian Saints edited by Krusch and Levison in the *Monumenta Germaniae*; and Malnory, *Quid Luxovienses monachi*. . . . The best summary is in Hauck's *Kirchengesch. Deutsch.*, Vol. I.

<sup>10</sup> Filibert dedicated one of the altars in the church of Jumièges to St. Columban. *Vit. Filib.*, 8.

Remaclus, the first abbot of Stablo and Malmedy, having been a monk of Luxeuil and Solignac.

Although he had never known Columban personally, few who had were so thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of the great Celt as St. Wandregisel. Being of noble parentage and a kinsman of the elder Pepin, he was rapidly advancing to the highest offices in the State, when he suddenly bade adieu to all his prospects and retired with a friend to a little hermitage on the banks of the Meuse. Inspired by God, as he was firmly convinced, he undertook a journey across the Alps to Bobbio, the last resting-place of St. Columban. From here he resolved to make a pilgrimage to Ireland in order to imbibe the spirit of Irish monasticism at its source. For some reason or other he did not carry out his resolution, but retired to the monastery of St. Oyand, in the Jura, which had just been reformed on the pattern of Luxeuil. Seized anew with the desire to cross the sea, he left St. Oyand and took the road to the northwest of Gaul. In Rouen, Audoenus, who had been made bishop of that city some years before, wishing to win for his diocese the services of a man of such eminent talents and sanctity, persuaded him to give up his plan altogether and to join the ranks of his clergy. But even in the secular ministry Wandregisel did not cease to be a monk, and in 649 the munificence of Erchinoald, Mayor of the Palace under Clovis II, enabled him to found the monastery of Fontenelle, on the ruins of an ancient Gallo-Roman town. No monastic institution within the Frankish dominions was so favored by the Pepins as Fontenelle. It became the mother of many religious houses in the north and south of France, and for many years the abbots of Fleury were selected from the monks of St. Wandrille.

The influence of Luxeuil can be traced in another direction—to the Austrasian nobles who brought about the fall of Brunhilde. Arnulf, their leader, afterwards became bishop of Metz and closed his days as a monk. Romarich, a friend of Arnulf, who possessed some property on the Upper Moselle not far from Luxeuil, kept up friendly relations with Columban. Always an enthusiastic admirer of Celtic monasticism, he at last made up his mind to become a monk himself. After spending some time in Luxeuil under Eustace, he founded a monastery on Mount Habendum, in the diocese of Toul.



Eustace placed the direction of the new institute in the hands of Amatus, a Gallo-Roman nobleman of Grenoble, whom he had induced to quit his hermitage in the mountains of the Valais and become a monk of Luxeuil. Habendum, or Remiremont, as it was called after Romarich's death, was a double monastery, one wing being reserved for the monks, the other for the nuns, with the church in common. It grew so rapidly that seven chapels had to be erected to accommodate the nuns, and before the *Laus Perennis*,<sup>11</sup> or perpetual psalmody, could be instituted. The original monastery stood on a hill; after its destruction by the Magyars or Normans, a new convent arose on the river bank and formed the nucleus of the present city of Remiremont.

Another Austrasian nobleman who stood in connexion with Luxeuil was Gundoin, the father of Bishop Leudoin-Bodo of Toul. He had entertained Eustace on the latter's return from Bavaria at his villa near Langres, and the abbot had rewarded his hospitality by giving sight to his little daughter Sadalberga, who had been born blind. On Waldebert's advice, Sadalberga afterwards devoted her whole patrimony to the founding of a nunnery in Laon.<sup>12</sup>

Thus we see that the influence of Luxeuil was felt far and near. Contemporary writers praise the strictness of its discipline, the fervor and learning of its monks, and the wisdom of its abbots. Monasteries of men and women, into which the germs of decay had entered with the spirit of the world, rose to new life through its timely influence. Abbots who had the welfare of their institutes at heart, did not hesitate to betake themselves in person to the valley in the Vosges in order to drink in light and vigor at this providential fountain. Thither bishops sent their candidates for the priesthood to be trained in the science of the saints as well as in secular learning. Ragenisel of Troyes, we are told, entrusted Frodobert to the care of Waldebert "to learn the mysteries of the spiritual life, and to bring back to his native province the most sweet examples of sanctity and perfection". So widespread indeed was the beneficent influence of Luxeuil that the biographer of Berchar

<sup>11</sup> A system by which a number of monks or nuns, usually divided into seven choirs, took turns in singing the Divine Office, so that "the voice of praise rose continually from the Congregation".

<sup>12</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 8.

of Montiérender could write: "What city or province may not boast of possessing a bishop or abbot from the school of the blessed Columban?"

For a time at least the abbots of Luxeuil appear to have exercised a kind of supervision over all the monasteries founded by former monks of Luxeuil. Jonas tells us that Eustace called Amatus and Romarich to account for certain administrative acts of theirs, and we know that Waldebert claimed and exercised disciplinary powers over Solignac. But before the end of the seventh century all the daughters of Luxeuil were emancipated from the mother-institute. This was chiefly due to the rapid spread of the Benedictine Rule, which began to be known in France and Germany about the beginning of the seventh century, and gradually made its way into all the Continental monasteries, at first coalescing with, and then supplanting, the Columbanian Rule, until, at the beginning of the ninth century, it was formally adopted throughout the Carolingian dominions. The ultimate victory of the Benedictine Rule over all its competitors added strength, unity and stability to the monastic system, for it was, as Cardinal Newman expresses it, "but the expression of the genius of monachism in those first times of the Church, with a more exact adaptation to their needs than could elsewhere be met with".

A word still remains to be said about Columban's share in bringing about the exemption of the regulars from the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishops. In the sixth century all the monasteries of Gaul were subject to the authority of the bishops, who often nominated the abbots, deposed them, or visited them with disciplinary punishments. In Ireland, on the contrary, the abbots were practically independent of all episcopal control; and on his arrival in Gaul Columban appears to have followed the traditions of his native land in this respect as scrupulously as in others. He nowhere treats explicitly of the relations of the monastery with the diocesan bishop, but his manner of acting left no doubt as to his mind on this subject. He planted his houses in the diocese of Besançon with no other authorization except that of the king of Burgundy, and he tells us himself he sent for a Celtic bishop to consecrate the altar of the church of Luxeuil.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Nantes to Attala and the monks of Luxeuil.

His example was followed by his disciples. In the charter of Solignac, Eligius expressly stipulates that neither the local bishop, nor any other person except the king, shall exercise any powers whatever over the persons or the property of the monastery. In case of a relaxation of discipline, not the bishop, as the Benedictine Rule prescribes,<sup>14</sup> but the abbot of Luxeuil should have the right and the duty to interfere.<sup>15</sup> "No bishop," we read in the charter granted to Rebais by Dagobert I, "neither any of those now in office, nor any future one, nor any episcopal functionary, nor any other person, shall arrogate to himself any powers whatever over the monastery; neither shall any bishop enter the monastery, unless it be to pray, and then only with the permission of the abbot and the congregation."<sup>16</sup> Bishop Faro of Meaux, a life-long friend of the Irish monks, confirmed these privileges in a document dated in the year 648. Similar exemptions were granted to nearly all the monasteries founded on the pattern of Luxeuil. In many cases abbots were empowered to invite other bishops besides their ordinaries to perform episcopal functions in their monasteries, or even to attach cloister, or choir, bishops to their institutes for this purpose.

It is a remarkable fact, which serves to illustrate the spread of Celtic ideas on the Continent, that many bishops, notably Mummolenus of Noyon, Nummerian of Trier, and Drauscus of Soissons, of their own accord promoted the work of monastic emancipation. Others, however, accorded the desired immunities only after pressure had been brought to bear on them by the secular power; while not a few, such as Audoenus of Rouen and Aredius of Vaison, positively refused to give up their time-honored jurisdiction over the religious houses located in their dioceses. Audoenus deposed Filibert, the founder and first abbot of Jumièges, and, in spite of the opposition of the monks, appointed two abbots in succession.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Reg. S. Ben.*, 64.

<sup>15</sup> Krusch proved the authenticity of this charter against Malnory. (*M. G. SS. Rer. Mer.*, IV, pp. 746-748; and V, p. 88.)

<sup>16</sup> *M. G. Dip.*, I, p. 16, no. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Luxeuil was devastated by the Saracens in 732; rebuilt under Charlemagne, it was sacked in the ninth century by the Normans. The abbots of Luxeuil were temporal princes of the German empire till 1594, after the death of Philip de la Baume in 1631 Luxeuil was reformed and became the most

The influence of Bobbio was by no means so far-reaching as that of Luxeuil. The Rule of Columban did not find entrance into any existing monastic institution, nor could Bobbio boast of even one daughter or colony in all Italy. The unsettled political state of the country, the frequent wars between the Lombards and the Byzantines, the Aquileian schism, the prevalence of Arianism, and, in some parts at least, a recrudescence of paganism, were so many obstacles in the way of a normal development of monasticism in Northern Italy. In Southern Italy and Sicily the Byzantine influence was predominant, and it would have been in vain to attempt to plant Latin monasteries where the Greek Rite was steadily gaining the upper hand. In Rome and Central Italy the Benedictine Rule, favored and propagated by the Holy See, alone enjoyed the right of way.

Though hampered in its growth, Bobbio nobly fulfilled its providential mission, taking an honorable place both in the missionary activity and the intellectual advance of the early Middle Ages. Here also Columban was happy in the choice of his successor. After having been instructed in the liberal arts by his father, an influential Burgundian nobleman, Attala had been sent to Lyons to be trained for the secular priesthood under the eye of Bishop Arigius. Feeling himself called to the monastic life, he betook himself with two other young men to the monastery of Lérins. But that once famous sanctuary of learning and piety having long since fallen into a sad state of decay, he soon quitted it for Luxeuil, where he became the trusted friend and assistant of Columban.

As abbot of Bobbio, Attala followed faithfully in the footsteps of his master. So severe indeed was his discipline that the monks declared themselves unable to bear its weight, and many of them left the monastery, some to build for themselves hermitages in the Apennines, others to retire to Genoa and Pavia, where they spread all sorts of lying reports against Attala and the Rule of Columban. The sudden death of the chief detractor brought some of them to their senses. They

important monastery of the Congregation of St. Vanne. It was suppressed in 1790. (Baumont, *Étude Hist. sur l'abbaye de Luxeuil*, Luxeuil, 1902.) The ancient monastery buildings are occupied at present by the archdiocesan seminary.

returned to Bobbio and, after submitting to the prescribed penances, were readmitted into the community. It was probably during this crisis that Attala appealed to Luxeuil for Frankish monks to fill the places of the recalcitrant Italians. At all events the names of most of the prominent monks of Bobbio mentioned by Jonas are decidedly Frankish.

Besides being a strict disciplinarian, Attala was also a man of sound learning and eminent skill in controversy. He combated Arianism with vigor and fearlessness and successfully resisted every attempt of Agrestius and his following to introduce the Aquileian schism into the valley of the Trebbia.<sup>18</sup> Warned in a vision to set his house in order before undertaking his last journey, he had the hedges repaired, the cells covered with fresh thatch, and the books in the library rebound. He died 10 March, 626, at the foot of the cross which he had erected at the entrance of his cell: his body was laid to rest beside that of his master in the basilica of St. Peter.

Attala was succeeded by Bertulf, a relative of St. Arnulf of Metz, to whom he owed both his conversion to Christianity and his vocation to the religious life. He had hardly assumed the reins of government, when he was forced to engage in a long conflict with the bishop of Tortona, with the sequel of which the reader is already acquainted.<sup>19</sup> By royal grants the possessions of the monastery were considerably enlarged, and on the death of Sundrarit the whole of the valuable salt well became the property of the monks. A mill was erected on the Trebbia, the supervision of which was entrusted to one of the monks, who was often in danger of his life, especially in the springtime, when the angry torrent, swollen by the rains and the melting snows, and dragging huge rocks and logs down from the mountains, blocked up the sluices and threatened to sweep both him and his charge away. The culture of the vine was also introduced, and Jonas tells us how hard it was, in spite of the thick hedge with which the vineyard was fenced in, to prevent the foxes and other wild beasts from devastating it. When the time for the vintage drew near, one of the monks was constantly on guard to frighten away the

<sup>18</sup> *Vit. Col.*, II, 9.

<sup>19</sup> See Introduction: Jonas of Bobbio, the Biographer of St. Columban.

thieving birds, as well as the thieving peasant boys of the neighborhood.

Under the third abbot, Bobolenus, the son of Columban's inquisitive friend Winioch, the number of monks rose to more than one hundred and fifty, and the prestige of the monastery was enhanced by a new papal privilege. At the instance of the Lombard sovereigns, Rothari and Gundiberga, the protectors of Bobbio, Pope Theodore in 643 confirmed and extended the immunities previously conceded by Honorius I. The abbot and the community were empowered to invite any bishop whom they pleased to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice in the monastery, to confer Holy Orders, or to perform other episcopal functions. When the sacred functions were over, the bishop was to leave the monastery as soon as possible without demanding any compensation for his services. The diocesan bishop was expressly warned not to encroach on the privileges of the monastery in any way, or to retrench its revenues. Only such a one was to be ordained abbot as the whole congregation should have chosen. For his actions within the monastery the abbot was to be answerable only to the Holy See. When Bobbio became the seat of a bishop in the eleventh century, the question of exemption was mooted once more. It was finally settled by Honorius III, who decreed that the monastery of San Colombano must submit to the jurisdiction of the bishops of Bobbio.

For many years after its foundation Bobbio could exert but little influence upon the intellectual life of Italy. Whatever time could be spared from the arduous labors of building and pioneer farming was devoted to missionary work among the Arian or semi-pagan inhabitants of Lombardy. Still literary pursuits were by no means neglected. Jonas of Susa, the biographer of St. Columban, who received his education at the school of Bobbio, though not too well grounded in Latin etymology and syntax, possessed a very fair knowledge of Roman and early Christian literature. Later on the study of the classics appears to have been almost entirely neglected. The "*Carmen de Synodo Ticinensi*,"<sup>20</sup> which a certain Magister Stephanus of Bobbio composed about the year 700 at the re-

<sup>20</sup> *M. G. SS. Lang. et Ital.*, 191, 6-10. The "*Carmen*" was written on parchment from which writings of Ulphilas had been erased.

quest of King Kuninkbert, displays a very defective acquaintance with the rules of grammar and prosody; and the *Epitaph on Cumman*, an Irish bishop who died in Bobbio in 720, is not much better. There is a marked improvement, however, as regards both style and versification in the *Planctus Caroli*,<sup>21</sup> written in Bobbio some time after the death of Charlemagne. But medieval Bobbio deserves our admiration and gratitude, not for what it added to the treasures of the world's literature, but for what it preserved to us out of the storehouse of antiquity: not its theologians, chroniclers or poets are the glory of Bobbio, but its manuscripts.

Until quite recently it was the current opinion that Bobbio possessed a *Promptuarium*, or parchment magazine, which furnished the monks with writing-material for their *Scriptorium*, and that the numerous manuscripts of the classics for which its library was so justly celebrated, had been obtained from Rome. But a critical examination of the oldest Bobbio and Verona codices has shown that many of them originally belonged to the famous library of Cassiodorus in Vivarium.<sup>22</sup> How or when these treasures came to Bobbio, it is impossible to say with absolute certainty. In all probability the monks of Vivarium retired to Rome with the library of their founder in the first decade of the seventh century when the Greek Rite invaded Southern Italy. Most of the books were then either sold or given to Queen Theodolinda, who no doubt permitted her friend Columban to select a number of them for his new monastery, and sent the rest to the cathedral school of Verona. At Bobbio the valuable manuscripts thus acquired were for many years preserved intact; then, owing to the scarcity of parchment, many of them were scraped and washed and used a second time as writing material.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *M. G. Poet. aev. Carol.*, I, 435.

<sup>22</sup> See Rudolf Beer, *Bemerkungen über den ältesten Handschriftenbestand des Klosters Bobbio* (anzeiger d. k. Akad. d. Wissen. phil.-hist. Klasse, 48). Cf. Hörle, *Mönchs- und Klerikerbildung in Italien*, Freiburg, 1914.

<sup>23</sup> Manuscripts in which one of two earlier erased writings are found are called *Palimpsests*. The original writing was removed by washing, rubbing with a pumice-stone or erasing with a sharp instrument. A monk of Tegernsee (eleventh century) describes the process followed in his monastery as follows: "Place the written parchment over night in milk. Then take it out, strew it with flour, and stretch it over a frame to prevent it from shrinking. When dry, rub it with chalk and pumice-stone, and the parchment will be as white

A glance at the oldest manuscripts of Bobbio reveals the fact that the interest of the monks centred chiefly on liturgical and patristic works. Bible texts, collections of Canons, Rufinus, Josephus, Cassiodorus, and grammatical treatises were not prescribed; while the profane authors were for the most part sacrificed to the theologians. Thus Cicero's Orations, Fragments of Galen, Dioscorides, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, the Orations of Fronto and Symmachus, Gargilius Martialis, Pelagonius, the Codex Theodosianus, and various mathematical treatises had to make way for Sedulius' *Carmen Paschale*, St. Isidor's *Etymologies*, Acts of Councils, St. Cyprian's *De Opere et Eleemosynis*, Cassian's *Conferences*, the Liber Pontificalis and various treatises on Grammar and Prosody.

In the ninth century we hear of several learned Irishmen who spent some time in Northern Italy, and by teaching and writing contributed not a little to raise the standard of secular and religious education. In 825, Dungal was invited to Italy by the Emperor Lothar, and taught for some years at the monastery of St. Augustine in Pavia, lecturing on Virgil, Horace and Ovid. It was probably this Dungal who had the celebrated controversy with Claudius of Turin on the subject of the veneration of images. About the same time Donatus, another Irish pilgrim, became bishop of Fiesole. Two poems of his, written in beautiful distichs, are still extant. He taught, as he tells us in one of them, reading, writing, prosody and Christian Doctrine:

Grammata discipulis dictabam scripta libellis,  
Scemata metrorum, dicta beata senum.<sup>24</sup>

Sedulius Scottus, the versatile scholar and graceful poet, and another Dungal visited Milan in 850. In the eleventh century we meet with a third Dungal, who spent his last days at Bobbio, to which he bequeathed his private library of forty-three precious manuscripts.

as if it had never been written on." Valuable texts or fragments have been recovered from *Palimpsests* belonging to Bobbio, St. Gall, Verona, Grottaferata, etc., by the use of chemicals and latterly by a photographic process. There is a famous Palimpsest Institute in the Benedictine abbey of Beuron, Germany.

<sup>24</sup> *M. G. Poet. ævi Carol*, III, 692.



Although the monks of Bobbio produced very little original work themselves, their *Scriptorium* was nevertheless the busiest and most famous in Italy from the seventh to the twelfth century. The fact that the scribes made extensive use of shorthand is alone sufficient evidence of their intense activity. Either Columban himself or some other Celtic monk had imported from Ireland a knowledge of the Tironian<sup>25</sup> word-signs, and some ingenious scribe had afterwards combined these with the older Italian syllabic system elaborated in the north of Italy in the fifth and sixth centuries, and thus produced a new system of stenography which soon found its way into the scriptoria of Verona and St. Gall. A Bobbio copyist even tried his hand at Greek tachygraphie. The Greek mathematical fragments, with its numerous stenographical abbreviations, now in the Ambrosian library of Milan, was transcribed in Bobbio before the end of the seventh century. The copyist misunderstood some of the signs of the fourth-century original, but his attempt is all the more remarkable as it is the earliest specimen we possess of the use of stenography in medieval book-writing.<sup>26</sup>

If we consider how laborious was the work of transcribing the ponderous tomes of the Fathers, and how rare and expensive the vellum or parchment on which all literary matter intended to be permanent was written, we can imagine what a relief it must have been to be able to write shorthand, and how fervently the scribes must have blessed the memory of the man who conferred this blessing on mankind.

The Bobbio Library was sadly pillaged during the fifteenth and the following centuries. A tenth-century catalogue, still extant, records the stately number of seven hundred manuscripts; in 1461, when a second catalogue was drawn up, there were only two hundred and forty to enter; and soon after this, two raids were made on the collection, first by Giorgio Merula, in 1493, and two years later by Tommaso Inghirami, a scriptor in the Vatican Library at Rome, both of whom carried off many priceless codices. In 1606, Cardinal Federico Borromeo obtained a number of Bobbio manuscripts for the

<sup>25</sup> Tiro, the learned freedman and amanuensis of Cicero, is said to have introduced the system of shorthand called after him into ancient Rome.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Hörle, l. c., p. 59 f.

Ambrosian Library of Milan, and when Patrick Fleming visited Bobbio in 1624, the librarian complained that several valuable manuscripts, amongst others St. Columban's Commentary on the Gospels, had been sent to Rome;<sup>27</sup> we still possess the letter of Pope Paul V, dated 3 November, 1618, in which he thanks the abbot of Bobbio for the books presented to him.<sup>28</sup> What was left after this date gradually found its way into the libraries of Turin, Milan, Naples, and Vienna; Bobbio itself cannot boast of a single fragment of its once famous "House of Manuscripts".

In Bobbio, as in Luxeuil and the other Columbanian monasteries, the Rule of St. Columban was superseded by that of St. Benedict, and throughout the Middle Ages, and up to their suppression during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars at the close of the eighteenth century, Luxeuil and Bobbio shared the fortunes of the great Benedictine Order; and, strange to say, even in his own monasteries Columban himself was regarded as a disciple of the Patriarch of Monte Cassino: over the ancient shrine in the crypt of the church of Bobbio the following legend still greets the eye of the visitor: "S. Columbanus, Hibernensis, D. Benedicti discipulus et sectator. . . Animo nunc coelo, corpore hic requiescit." The Benedictines all the world over still celebrate his feast, and their Breviary calls him "one of the most excellent promoters of the monastic life".

In his native land Columban's name, like that of all the other missionaries and pilgrims to the Continent,<sup>29</sup> was for many centuries forgotten; it occurs neither in the secular annals nor in the catalogues of the Saints. His writings were unknown to his countrymen at home till the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>30</sup>

At Luxeuil Columban's memory was more or less eclipsed by that of St. Waldebert, under whom the monastery attained

<sup>27</sup> See *Max. Biblio. Pat.*, XII, 2.

<sup>28</sup> Rossetti, *Bobbio Illustrato*, III, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> An exception is St. Deicola, or Dichuil, the founder of Lure, between Luxeuil and Besançon, who is supposed to have been a companion of St. Columban, but he probably came to Gaul long after Columban's death.

<sup>30</sup> The first to prepare a fairly complete edition of Columban's works was the Irish Franciscan scholar, Patrick Fleming, of the Irish College of Louvain.

its greatest splendor and influence, and although his feast is inscribed in the calendar of the archdiocese of Besançon as a greater double, it is only in the diocesan seminary, which is placed under his patronage, that it is celebrated with any degree of solemnity. Southwestern Germany, the Vorarlberg and Switzerland, on the other hand, honor him as one of their apostles. But it is in Northern Italy that he has received the full measure of veneration due to his labors and his sanctity. At his shrine in the beautiful abbey church of Bobbio thousands of pilgrims annually gather on his feast day to kiss the silver bust in which his relics are exposed. Afflicted mothers above all come to invoke his aid: they place a loaf of bread on the altar of the crypt to be blessed in his name and to be cut with the knife which he had used during his lifetime and which he had blessed so often.

St. Columban is the patron of the diocese of Bobbio, and the two doves in the arms of the episcopal city constantly remind the inhabitants of the valley of the Trebbia of the pilgrim from Hiverne, who brought them the glad message of heavenly peace and the blessings of Christian civilization. From Bobbio the cult of St. Columban spread over Lombardy and into the Rhaetian and Tridentine Alps. Many parishes in the diocese of Bobbio, Piacenza, Milan, Tortona, and Chiavari are dedicated to him and besides the little market town on the Lambro, in the diocese of Lodi, a village on the Mella, near Lake Idro, and two lofty mountain peaks, one between the Val di Satto and the Val Viola, the other in the Val Tellina, bear the name of San Colombano.

A glance at the bibliography of our Saint shows that, after thirteen hundred years, the influence of his powerful personality on the religious and social life of the seventh century is at last receiving due recognition. Our text-books of Church History, Canon Law and Liturgy no longer ignore him or dispose of him with a mere honorable mention. Every phase of his varied activity, as a monastic legislator, as a herald of the Gospel, as an Apostle of the Sacrament of Penance, as a patron and promoter of intellectual culture and the arts of peace in an age of blood and iron, has been carefully investigated; his writings have been edited by men who enjoy an international reputation for scholarship and critical acumen,

and probably on no other hagiographical document of the Middle Ages has so much erudition, so much conscientious and painstaking editorial labor been bestowed as on the *Vita Sancti Columbani*.<sup>31</sup> May these pages, full of shortcomings as they are, contribute in some small measure to pay the debt of gratitude, so long withheld, which the world owes to Columban, the Saint, the Missionary, "the King of Monks".

Nos ergo te deprecemur,  
Beate, ut nos Domino  
tu commendes.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> I refer to Bruno Krusch's edition of the *Vit. Col.*, "in usum scholarum," Hanover, 1905.

<sup>32</sup> Concluding lines of Ekkehard's hymn *In Nativitatem S. Columbani, Abbat*. Mone, l. c., p. 256.



## **APPENDICES**



## I.

### CHRONOLOGICAL QUESTIONS.

#### I. DATE OF ST. COLUMBAN'S DEATH.

IT is certain that St. Columban died on 23 November. (1) This date is supplied by Jonas,<sup>1</sup> and is supposed by the almost contemporary *Martyrologium Hieronymi: VIII K. Dec. In Italia, monasterio Bobbio, depositio sancti Columbani, Abb.* (2) In the *Codex F.*, III, 8, of the National Library of Turin, we read, under 23 November, in letters of gold the words: "Sancti Columbani, confessoris". (3) St. Columban's feast has been celebrated from time immemorial on 23 November in Luxeuil, Bobbio, Remiremont, and other places. (4) According to Wettinus,<sup>2</sup> Columban died on a Sunday, and in 615 (the year, as we shall show presently, of his death) the 23 November fell on a Sunday. Hence the 21 November, the date given by Mabillon, must have been substituted for the real date through the negligence of some scribe.

It is equally certain that St. Columban died in the year 615. After the defeat of Theodebert at Tolbiac, which took place in the summer of 612,<sup>3</sup> St. Columban left Bregenz and crossed the Alps to Lombardy. After spending some time at the Lombard Court ("dum ille poenes Mediolanium urbem moraretur"<sup>4</sup>), he founded the monastery of Bobbio. In the course of the year 614 Chlothar, who had become sole king of the Franks in 613,<sup>5</sup> despatched Eustace to Italy to bring St. Columban back to Burgundy. About a year after this event ("expleto anni circulo"<sup>6</sup>) St. Columban died in Bobbio.

#### II. DATE OF ST. COLUMBAN'S BIRTH.

The only clue is supplied by St. Columban himself in his *Carmen ad Fidolium*: "Nunc ad olympiadis ter senos (al. senae) venimus annos." If we take the Olympiad in the ordinary sense, St. Colum-

<sup>1</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Vit. S. Galli*, 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Fredegar*, IV, 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Vit. Col.*, 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Fredegar*, IV, 42.

<sup>6</sup> *Vit. Col.*, 30.



ban says that he is from 68 to 72 years old; if we take it in the sense of *lustrum*, he was from 86 to 90 years old. But when was the poem written? In Luxeuil before 610? in Bregenz before 613? or in Italy between 613 and 615? It is not possible to fix the time with absolute certainty, but the description which the poet gives of the feeble state of his health seems to point to the last year of his life. We are therefore justified in placing his birth either between 542 and 545, or 528 and 533. Krusch,<sup>7</sup> following Mabillon,<sup>8</sup> favors the earlier date, and quotes Ausonius<sup>9</sup> in favor of his contention that St. Columban used Olympiad as a synonym for *lustrum*. In this case St. Columban would have been at least 60 years old when he left Ireland—an unusual age, to say the least, for undertaking the foundation of monasteries in a foreign land and the evangelization of heathen nations. He would have been almost a nonagenarian when he preached and wrote with such vigor against the Arians of Lombardy,<sup>10</sup> and engaged in the Three Chapters controversy. It is true that in his letter to Boniface IV he calls himself a “baldhead”, but, aside from the fact that baldness is by no means an infallible sign of extreme old age, the tenor and tone of the whole letter make it all but impossible to conclude that the writer was past the common age of man. Jonas, moreover, tells us that St. Columban took an active part in the work of restoring the Church of St. Peter and building the monastery of Bobbio: he helped to carry heavy trunks of trees down steep mountain-sides and along the edges of precipices<sup>11</sup>—an extraordinary feat, indeed, for a man of eighty-six! For these reasons we are in favor of the later date.

It may be urged in favor of the earlier date of his birth that in the letter to the Burgundian bishops, written about 603, he calls himself an old man. But hasn't a man who has passed his sixtieth year a good right to this title? Besides, in the letter in question, he begs to be permitted to live on in silence in the depths of the forest he had chosen for his abode, and asks the bishops whether it would not be better to console than to vex “a few poor veterans, a few old pilgrims”. His purpose was evidently to arouse sympathy; hence he lays stress on his advanced age; but from the words themselves we cannot conclude that he was over seventy years old at the time.

<sup>7</sup> Introd. to his edition of the *Vita Columbani*.

<sup>8</sup> *Annales ord. S. Benedicti*, I, p. 308.

<sup>9</sup> XXII, 4, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Vit. Col.*, I, 30.

<sup>11</sup> *L. c.*, I, 30.

## III. ST. COLUMBAN'S ARRIVAL IN BURGUNDY.

The year of St. Columban's arrival in Burgundy is supplied by two passages in the *Vita*: According to I, 24, he was driven from Luxeuil three years before Chlothar became sole king of the Franks, that is, in 610; according to I, 20, his banishment took place in the twentieth year after his arrival; therefore the latter falls in the year 591. Before following the invitation to the Burgundian court, St. Columban spent some time in itinerant preaching (I, 5); hence he must have landed in Brittany in 589 or 590.

The statement in the *Vita Sadalbergae*<sup>12</sup> that Luxeuil was founded in the reign of Childebert II is probably correct; for Gunthram died 29 March, 592, and Childebert II, his successor, in the autumn of 595. If we suppose, as I think we must, that at least two years elapsed between the founding of Annegray and Luxeuil, the date of the latter foundation will be 593-4.

## IV. THE LETTERS OF ST. COLUMBAN.

1. The Letter to St. Gregory the Great could not have been written before 597-8: (a) because the Candidus mentioned therein was sent into Gaul by Gregory in 595 to administer the patrimony of St. Peter in that country, "to collect its revenue and to invest them in raiment for the poor, or in English slave lads to serve in the monasteries and receive a Christian education" (see Gregory's letters to Childebert II, Brunhilde, and Aetherius of Lyons); and (b) because St. Gregory's *Commentary on Ezechiel*, of which St. Columban speaks, was not finished until 595-6.

It was not written after 600. (1) From the context we learn that it was written in the year in which the Celtic Easter fell on the 14 moon of the Victorian Cycle, which, after 595, happened only in 600 and 603 (see Appendix 2, Paschal Table). (2) Now in the letter to the Burgundian Bishops, which, as we shall see, was written in 603, St. Columban refers to a Pro Memoria addressed by him to the Pope three years previously: hence the letter to St. Gregory must be dated in the year 600.

2. The Letter to the Burgundian Bishops was written in the year 603. St. Columban himself supplies this date, as he tells us that, at the time of writing, he had already spent twelve years in the Vosges ( $591 + 12 = 603$ ).

3. Hauck<sup>13</sup> thinks that St. Columban's Second Letter on the Easter Question was written to Pope Boniface IV in 609 or 610. The beginning of the letter, he says, supposes a longer interval since the

<sup>12</sup> Mabillon, *A. S.*, II, p. 405.

<sup>13</sup> *Kirchengeschichte*, I, 601.

death of St. Gregory, and from the body of the letter we see that St. Columban had given up all idea of changing the Frankish Easter date, and would be content if he were permitted to keep up the Irish Easter custom in his own monasteries. Krusch<sup>14</sup> and Gundlach<sup>15</sup> believe that it was addressed to Pope Sabinian in 604-5, because a man of St. Columban's ardent temperament would hardly have waited six years before protesting against the proceedings of a synod which had attacked him so vigorously for his cherished Celtic Easter practice. This opinion appears to be the more probable.

4. The Letter to the Monks of Luxeuil was written in 610, the year of St. Columban's banishment, as we learn from the letter itself.

5. The Letter to Pope Boniface IV on the Affair of the Three Chapters belongs to St. Columban's Italian period. The words: "Ecce conturnantur gentes, inclinantur regna", point to the events of the year 613: the defeat and death of Brunhilde, and the conquest of Burgundy and Austrasia by Chlothar of Neustria.

6. It is impossible to fix any exact dates for the letters in prose and verse addressed to various friends. They were probably written after St. Columban's banishment, either in Bregenz, or in Lombardy; the Adonics to Fidolius most probably, as we have seen, in the last year of his life.

#### V. TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF ST. COLUMBAN.

A.D.

- 542 St. Columban born in Leinster;
- 558 enters the School of Sinell at Cluain-Inis;
- 572 ordained priest at Bangor;
- 589-90 leaves Bangor for the Continent;
- 591 founds Annegray in Burgundy;
- 593-4 founds Luxeuil; Fontaine;
- 600 writes to Pope St. Gregory the Great on the Easter Question;
- 603 Burgundian Bishops summon St. Columban before a synod; he refuses to appear, but writes a letter to the assembled Fathers;
- 604-5 St. Columban appeals to Pope Sabinian against the synod;
- 606-7 beginning of the conflict with Theoderic and Brunhilde;
- 609-10 St. Columban banished from Luxeuil, and then from Burgundy; writes to his monks from Nantes;
- 610-12-13 Alamannian mission;
- 613-14 St. Columban's sojourn at the Lombard Court; writes against the Arians, and to Pope Boniface IV;
- 614 foundation of Bobbio;
- 615 (23 November) dies at Bobbio.

<sup>14</sup> L. c.

<sup>15</sup> *Mon. Ger. Epist.*, III, p. 164.

## II

### PASCHAL TABLE FROM A. D. 590 TO A. D. 614.

According to Victorius of Aquitaine. (Mommisen: <i>Chron. min.</i> , p. 688-90.)				According to Philocalus <sup>1</sup> (A. 354). (Krusch: <i>N. Archiv</i> , IX, p. 167.)		
Year	Cycle of 19 Years	Date of Easter	Paschal Moon	Cycle of 84 Years	Date of Easter	Paschal Moon
590	31	{ 26 Mar. Alex. 2 Apr. Lat. }	{ 15 Alex. 22 Lat. }	41	26 Mar.	19
591	32	15 "	16	42	15 Apr.	20
592	33	6 "	18	43	30 Mar.	15
593	34	29 Mar.	21	44	19 Apr.	17
594	35	{ 11 Apr. Alex. 18 " Lat. }	{ 15 Alex. 22 Lat. }	45	11 Apr.	19
595	36	3 "	19	46	27 Mar.	15
596	37	22 "	20	47	15 Apr.	16
597	38	{ 7 Apr. Alex. 14 " Lat. }	{ 15 Alex. 22 Lat. }	48	7 Apr.	18
598	39	30 Mar.	18	49	20 "	14
599	40	19 Apr.	19	50	12 "	16
600	41	10 "	21	51	3 "	18
601	42	26 Mar.	17	52	20 Mar.	21 <sup>2</sup>
602	43	15 Apr.	18	53	8 Apr.	15
603	44	7 "	21	54	31 Mar.	18
604	45	22 Mar.	16	55	19 Apr.	19
605	46	11 Apr.	17	56	4 "	14
606	47	3 "	20	57	27 Mar.	17
607	48	23 "	21	58	16 Apr.	18
608	49	7 "	16	59	7 "	20
609	50	30 Mar.	19	60	20 "	15
610	51	19 Apr.	20	61	12 "	18
611	52	4 "	16	62	28 Mar.	14
612	53	26 Mar.	18	63	16 Apr.	15
613	54	15 Apr.	19	64	8 "	17
614	55	31 Mar.	16	65	31 Mar.	20

<sup>1</sup> Furius Dionysius Philocalus, secretary or calligraphist of Pope Damasus I (d. 384), author of the so-called *Catalogus Iherianus*, a list of Consuls, feasts, Popes.

<sup>2</sup> In this year Columban probably celebrated Easter on the 21st moon, because the 14th fell before the 25th of March.

### III.

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##### A. THE WRITINGS OF ST. COLUMBAN:

###### 1. Letters

- a. To St. Gregory the Great,
- b. To a Synod of Burgundian Bishops,
- c. To Pope Sabinian,
- d. To the Monks of Luxeuil,
- e. To a Young Friend,
- f. To St. Boniface IV.

###### 2. Poems:

- a. Acrostic to Hunald,
- b. To Sethus,
- c. To Fidolius,
- d. To a Young Friend,
- e. A Boat Song.

###### 3. Regula Monachorum and Regula Coenobialis.

###### 4. Liber de Mensura Poenitentiarum.

###### 5. Ordo de Vita et Actione Monachorum.

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